BEHIND THE SCENES AT *NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM: BATTLE OF THE SMITHSONIAN* P. 19

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Buenos Aires' colorful Boca neighborhood.
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANIBAL GRECO / WPN

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Frank Lloyd Wright, c. 1959.
PHOTOGRAPH BY WILLIAM SHORT / GUGGENHEIM FOUNDATION, NEW YORK

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Learn how lionfish are invading coral reefs and what scientists are doing to fight back, at **Smithsonian.com/lionfish**

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ISTOCKPHOTO

A lionfish over a coral reef, East Timor.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Positive Thinking

Funny-looking cells and an air of expectation

BY CAREY WINFREY

INGFEI CHEN, who has been writing about science and medicine for the better part of two decades, likes stories about new ideas and new ways of thinking about old problems. So an article in a scientific journal about what she calls some "funny-looking" cells found in the brains of humans and great apes, but not in the brains of the lower primates, got her attention. "To anyone who's interested in why humans ended up with the unique brains we have—our unusual powers of language, speech, empathy and emotion—that is immediately intriguing," says Chen, who once anticipated a career as a molecular biologist. "That's long been a Holy Grail of science, to understand exactly what makes us human."

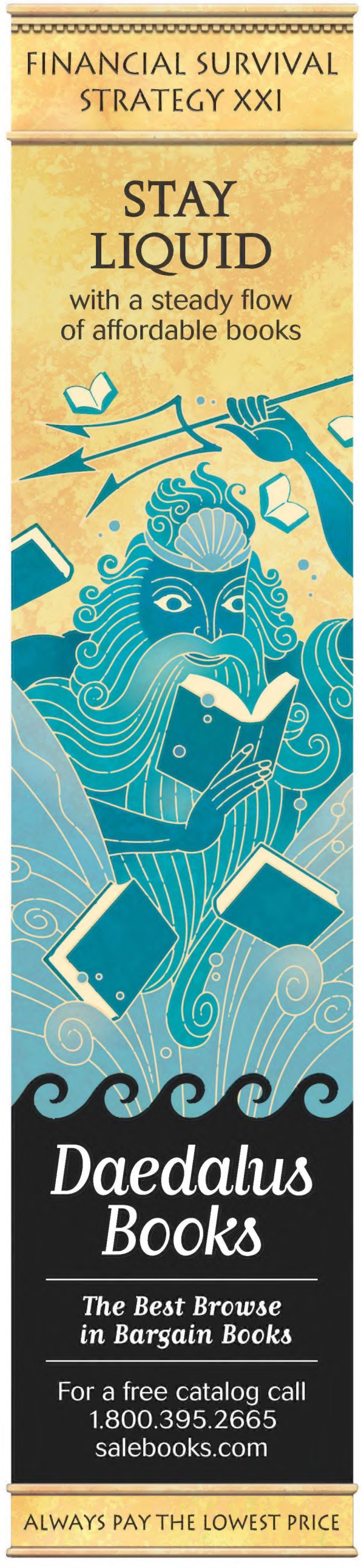
Chen: Immediately intrigued

The funny-looking cells, it turned out, were not confined to humans and great apes but were also present in elephants and whales. It also turned out that the cells—neurons, to be precise—were not a new discovery but a rediscovery. They were described in 1926 by Constantin von Economo, who wasn't sure what purpose they served. The knowledge that they may have something to do with social behavior would wait until neuroscientist John Allman and his colleagues began their brain experiments in the late 1990s. Chen's story about the meticulous detective work that led to that insight, "The Social Brain," begins on page 38.

JERRY ADLER is a contributing editor at *Newsweek*. What surprised him about the exhibition of Depression-era paintings at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., most by artists paid by the federal government, was their innocence. And optimism. "It obviously was a terrible time in American history and for most of the world," he says, "but the scenes the artists chose to paint were not of despair. The factories had an air of expectation about them. The fields are ready to be planted. The harbors are filled with a muscular energy. It's colorful. It's hopeful. The people are ready to work. When you look at these paintings, you understand that even in the very depths of the Depression, America was a country of tremendous energy and optimism. You understand why the generation that lived through that era went on to win the war and to build the nation that dominated the second half of the 20th century." Adler's story, "1934: Picturing Hard Times," begins on page 62.

Adler: Surprised by innocence

JOHN NIKOLAI; BEN ADLER



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READER CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR WEB SITE

YOUR KIND OF TOWN

BY DIANNA HODGES • LAMPASAS, TEXAS

MY TOWN OF 6,000 PEOPLE is, as we say, an hour from civilization in any direction. This is a good thing, we think, as it allows us to make our own fun and care for our own neighbors. We do not have a movie theater, but we have one of the best annual festivals (right) and parades in Texas. Spring Ho is named after the bubbling springs that feed one of the oldest swimming pools in the state. Our lives are rich in "old Texas" cattle auctions, cowboys, boot makers, quilt shows, "Howdy" to the neighbors and street dances. Yet we embrace the future with a brand-new high school, vineyards, sculpture gardens and an active mural-painting committee. Our mom and pop shops are in historic limestone storefronts around one of the most beautiful courthouses in existence. We raised millions of dollars to save our local hospital. We are a small town with a big heart deep in the heart of Texas.

Submit a **Your Kind of Town** story or photograph and find others at Smithsonian.com/yourkindoftown

GREENSBURG GREENS

This is an example of the American spirit I thought we had lost (right: Greensburg resident Scott Eller and his energy-efficient new house). Thanks for setting an example of how to pull yourself up by your bootstraps.

—Michael Garlick, of Saginaw, Michigan, on the Kansas town's reincarnation as a "green" community after a 2007 tornado
Smithsonian.com/greensburg

SAFETY CAUSES RUDENESS

Racers used to treat each other with utmost respect, knowing that missed signals could mean death. Drivers today are no longer shy about bumping competitors out of the way, knowing that injury is not likely.

—János Wimpffen, of Langley, Washington, on the paradoxical phenomenon called "risk compensation"
Smithsonian.com/risk

PHOTO CONTEST

EDITORS' PICK

"Within about 30 seconds the cloud was blown away by a gentle west wind."

—Anthony Romero, of Camarillo, Calif., on his photograph of a fireman during a training exercise

Visit our Web site to submit a photo to our 7th annual contest.

WHAT ON EARTH?
CAPTION CONTEST

No kidding, this photograph from the Smithsonian Institution archives depicts an actual event. But we'd still like you to write a caption for it. Please submit your entry by June 12 at Smithsonian.com/caption

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LETTERS READERS RESPOND TO THE **APRIL** ISSUE

Bruce Henderson ["Cook vs. Peary"] makes a convincing case for Cook having been the first to reach the North Pole. Peary comes off badly here. His refusal to transport Cook's belongings from Annoatok, Greenland, not only reflects poorly upon his character, it suggests that one man believed Cook had indeed reached the Pole. That man was Peary.

STEVEN NEWMAN, WASHINGTON, D.C.

POLAR CONTROVERSY

IF COOK WAS DEPRIVED of glory, consider Fridjtof Nansen, the Norwegian explorer and scientist who wrote of his polar experiences in the popular book *Farthest North*, first published in 1897. Henderson's article credits Cook with being the first to describe, in 1908, the constant movement of polar ice and its westerly direction. Not so. Prior to 1893, Nansen recognized that polar sea ice not only moved, but did so in a westerly direction. He then proved it with his 1893-96 expedition aboard the *Fram*.

RAYMOND F. FORD
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

WHO OWNS FOSSILS?

I READ THE STORY by Donovan Webster ["The Dino Wars"] with great interest. But what really got my attention was his quotation in "From the Editor." He says, "These fossils belong to all of us." Now suppose you're a South Dakota farmer and gold is discovered on your land. Or, better still, a great gushing oil well. Does Webster believe the gold or oil should belong to all of us? Why is it OK for the government to confiscate one kind of property but not another?

CHARLES HOULT
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

I WAS BOTHERED by the general tenor of Webster's article. Instead of dealing with the complex reality of the subject, he presented the more extreme views. This has a rather polarizing effect, which will satisfy neither academics nor commercial or amateur collectors. No doubt there are fossil thefts. It is also true that the introduction of big money has permanently changed vertebrate paleontology. But these are complicated issues. For example, would those *Therizinosaurs* have been discovered had Larry Walker not poached them?

ROB SULA
AURORA, ILLINOIS

THE SCIENCE OF ARTISTIC GENIUS

IT SEEMS that Donald Olson ["Celestial Sleuth"] has too much time on his hands. All his research and speculation about the circumstances surrounding specific paintings would be better spent on other problems, such as trying to find cures for human ills. Great paintings are great because of what the painter evoked, not because of a split second in eternity when the stars were in a certain position.

JOHN DEGATINA
SUMMERFIELD, FLORIDA

AS AN ARTIST I find Donald Olson's forensic astronomy illuminating. By contrast, his critics seem to have their heads in the clouds. Olson's findings establish facts that help us understand more fully what went into creating historic paintings.

JOHN DEFRANCESCO
MONUMENT, COLORADO

CHILI EXPERT NOT OVERHEATED

I ENJOY your regular profiles of ecologists, such as Brendan Borrell's story on Joshua Tewksbury and his work on wild chili peppers ["What's So Hot About Chili Peppers?"]. I don't know Dr. Tewksbury personally, but he is painted as a whimsical guy with misguided enthusiasm who does everything by the seat of his pants. This belies his strong history of professional publication, which could only have been produced by a focused and disciplined scientist.

TERRY MCGLYNN
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

CORRECTIONS:

The subject of the photograph on page 59 of the April issue was incorrectly identified as the explorer Robert Peary. It is almost certainly Lewis Lindsay Dyche, according to Dyche biographer William Sharp and Rebecca Schulte, an archivist at the University of Kansas, where Dyche's papers are kept. Dyche (1857-1915) was an explorer and a naturalist at the university who knew both Peary and his rival Frederick A. Cook. In the same article, we stated that Cook studied indigenous peoples of the Arctic and Antarctic. He did not conduct such studies in Antarctica.

"A Good Reed," about Benny Goodman's clarinet, created the mistaken impression that Mozart composed only two clarinet works. We regret the errors.

Please send letters to **LettersEd@si.edu** or to **Letters, Smithsonian, MRC 513, P.O. Box 37012, Washington, D.C. 20013.** Include a telephone number and address. Letters may be edited for clarity or space. Because of the high volume of mail we receive, we cannot respond to all letters. Send queries about the Smithsonian Institution to info@si.edu or to VIARC, Public Inquiry Mail Service, P.O. Box 37012, Washington, D.C. 20013.

WILD THINGS

LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

BY JOSEPH CAPUTO, T.A. FRAIL, MEGAN GAMBINO, ABIGAIL TUCKER AND SARAH ZIELINSKI

A SECRET OF FLIGHT FINALLY REVEALED

How *do* birds and flying insects control a turn? According to high-speed video studies of seven species by the universities of Delaware and North Carolina, they flap, say, the right wing more vigorously than the other to start a left turn—then flap both symmetrically to straighten out. Surprisingly, the technique is the same for creatures from fruit flies and moths to hummingbirds and cockatoos.

THE ADVANTAGE OF CLONES

Termite queens from a species in Japan have an unusual way of reproducing: they clone themselves, according to new genetic research from Okayama University and elsewhere. The cloned queens (left: the larger termites) accelerate the colony's population growth by mating with its king. And because the clones were not sired by the king to begin with, the colony minimizes a problem common in royal families: inbreeding.

WHY A LIZARD LOSES ITS TAIL

Lizards on Greek islands with venomous snakes shed their tails more often than lizards on snake-free islands, according to a University of Michigan-led team. It seems the threat of being injected in the tail with venom leads lizards to sacrifice the appendage—a life-preserving act—when any predator (or researcher) clamps on.

RISE OF THE OCTOPUS

Digging in Lebanon, scientists from the Freie University Berlin and elsewhere unearthed 95-million-year-old octopus fossils—the oldest, most complete specimens of their kind. Typically, a dead octopus doesn't fossilize; lacking a skeleton, it decays without a trace. It's not clear how these were preserved. And since the fossils (left: a specimen with an ink sac) closely resemble modern animals, the researchers say octopuses must have evolved even earlier than they had thought.

Observed

NAME: The largemouth bass, *Micropterus salmoides*.
HOOK ME ONCE: It strikes hard and fights long, and so is prized by anglers.
HOOK ME TWICE: An individual bass' likelihood of being caught depends in part on its parentage, say researchers led by the University of Illinois. In their 20-year study, fish prone to take the bait produced highly susceptible offspring; fish prone to forgo it produced less-hookable offspring.
HOOK ME THREE TIMES: Unlucky anglers have a new, genetic excuse: the gullible wild bass have been caught, leaving only the wily ones.

Watch a hummingbird and a hawk moth take flying turns at Smithsonian.com/WildThings

WILLIAM LEAMAN / ALAMY; KENJI MATSUURA; WALLY EBERHART / VISUALS UNLIMITED / GETTY IMAGES; MARTIN WOIKE / FOTO NATURA / MINDEN PICTURES; DR. DIRK FUCHS / FREIE UNIVERSAET, BERLIN

Who *Was* That Masked Man?

On assignment at Coney Island, Weegee brought his noir sensibility into broad daylight **BY MATTHEW GUREWITSCH**

AT 70 YEARS OLD AND COUNTING, the Parachute Jump still stands, a ghost of its former self. Built for the world's fair in 1939, the ride known affectionately as Brooklyn's Eiffel Tower has graduated to the status of official landmark. In Weegee's photograph *Coney Island at noon Saturday, July 5, 1942*—shot for the visually punchy, commercial-free, left-wing tabloid *PM*—the overgrown structure looms on the horizon in its glory: a memory within a memory.

Visit the spot today and you will find, raked by the Jump's skeletal shadow, a hotly contested landscape of urban blight. Peering into a crystal ball, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's administration sees a 12-acre amusement district surrounded by new housing, shops and parks. A civic group is lobbying for an amusement park twice as big as the mayor's, anchored by some landmark attraction as uniquely irresistible as the 443-foot-high London Eye, which hangs over the South Bank of the Thames like the slowly spinning wheel of a Titan's bicycle. A prominent developer envisions timeshare hotels and big stores. Reconciling such fantasies could take a while, and in times as tough as these, they all could fall apart. Meanwhile, Weegee's image of teeming humanity invites us to ponder the pursuit of happiness in these United States since the heyday of the Greatest Generation and perhaps to consider the fate of our lonely Spaceship Earth.

Weegee (above: in 1945) danced and screamed to get the beach crowd's attention (opposite). The masked man called himself the Spider.

Usher (later Arthur) Fellig, a.k.a. Weegee, was born in a part of Austria that now belongs to Ukraine, and landed in New York in 1910. Certainly he never thought of this or any of his pictures in metaphorical terms. His stock in trade was reality, mostly of the after-hours variety, mostly in his adopted Manhattan, and the grittier the view, the better. Metaphor had nothing to do with it. After his freelancing prime in the 1930s and '40s, he coasted on his celebrity in Hollywood and Europe before ending up back in New York, where he died of a brain tumor in 1968 at age 69.

According to Miles Barth, co-author of the book *Weegee's World*, Coney Island was a bit off our lensman's beat. "When it came to warm weather, Weegee was the last person you could imagine in shorts and sneakers and a T-shirt," Barth told me. "It was against everything he understood. He was doing fires, floods, car wrecks, murders. What interested him was crime." His sensibility chimed perfectly with contemporary film noir like *The Maltese Falcon, The Glass Key* or *The Big Sleep*, though compared with his hard-edged reportage, stills from the movies can look glamorous to a fault.

When *PM* began publishing, in the summer of 1940, the mercury was soaring, and the editors wanted to know how Joe Average was coping. Weegee went out and shot individuals sleeping on fire escapes, kids cooling off in the spray of fire hydrants and thousands upon thousands broiling at the beach. Thus the precedent was set for the hot summer of 1942, when Weegee headed back out to Coney Island.

"Whatever it took to get the shot, Weegee did it," Barth says. "That was part of his genius." Barth has it from Louie Liotta, Weegee's longtime assistant, that the boss climbed up on a lifeguard station and screamed and danced until everybody started to look. "And when they did," says Barth, "he took the photograph. It was that simple."

Not that the images Weegee came up with were always simple. What pops in this one, against steep odds, is one man balanced on the adjacent shoulders of two bare-chested sailors in gob caps. "The masked man said he was a laundry man," Weegee wrote, "but would only be photographed incognito.

WEEGEE (ARTHUR FELLIG) / INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF PHOTOGRAPHY / GETTY IMAGES (2)

"I don't take rear-end views of fat ladies," Weegee once said. "I like to take pictures of people having a good time." His Coney Island (below: 1941) had already begun its slow decline; today (above: January 2009) it awaits a revival.

The mask is a gag of his; he calls himself the Spider, and likes to frighten people." That mask looks like the hood of a hangman. Even in broad daylight, he gives you the willies.

Weegee's captions—he wrote his own—read like entries from the police blotter. *Crowd at Coney Island,* one begins. *Temperature 89 degrees. . . . They came early, and stayed late.* What's so hot about 89 degrees?, we wonder today, desensitized by global warming and spoiled by air conditioning. Back then the city must have felt like a furnace. Arriving one day at 4 A.M., Weegee found the sand covered with young couples on beach blankets. "I took pictures of them," he reported, deadpan: "When I asked them their names, they all said, 'It's just me and the wife,' as they pointed to the girl on the sand."

Coney Island, Barth says, was "originally meant to be a classy place. Over the years, it became middle class and then lower middle class and then working class." Every society needs its glittering playground, where, as the old song says, "the underworld can meet the elite." Like the 42nd Street of legend and like Las Vegas today, Coney Island straddled the chasm, or tried to.

And then it broke down. Weegee gives us Coney Island in its decline, yet kicking with messy life. In our time, plutocrats and civic leaders aspire to a grander future, even as doomsday prophets warn of melting polar ice caps and rising seas. Either way, a return to Weegee's Coney Island may eventually feel like a day at the beach.

MATTHEW GUREWITSCH *is a New York City-based writer.*

MARIO TAMA / GETTY IMAGES; WEEGEE (ARTHUR FELLIG) / INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF PHOTOGRAPHY / GETTY IMAGES

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MY KIND OF TOWN

FAIRHOPE, ALABAMA

An Easy Place

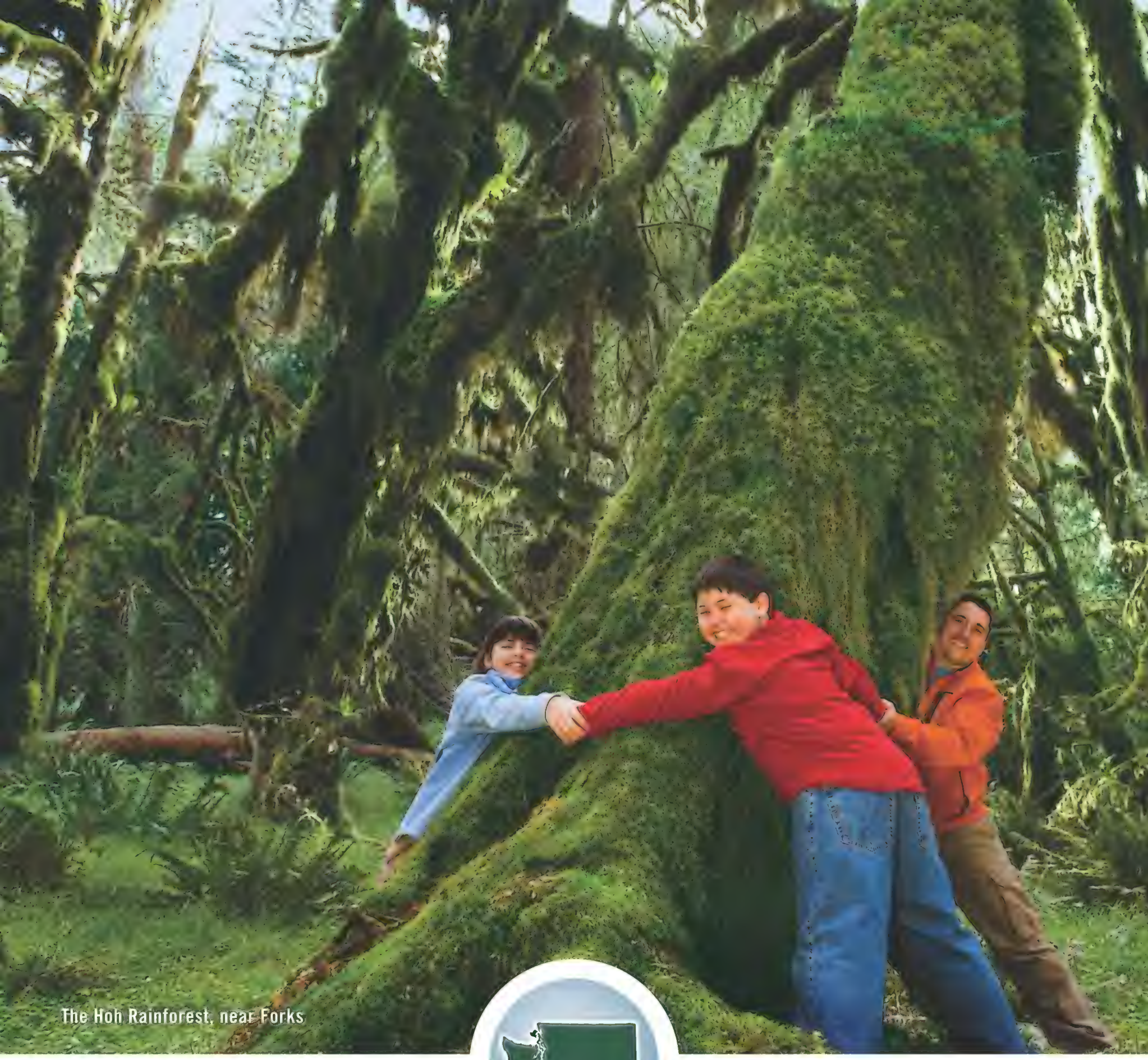
A hardscrabble son finds forgiving soil along a stretch of Mobile Bay

BY RICK BRAGG PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATT EICH

I GREW UP IN THE ALABAMA FOOTHILLS, landlocked by red dirt. My ancestors cussed their lives away in that soil, following a one-crop mule. My mother dragged a cotton sack across it, and my kin slaved in mills made of bricks dug and fired from the same clay. My people fought across it with roofing knives and tire irons, and cut roads through it, chain gang shackles rattling around their feet. My grandfather made liquor 30 years in its caves and hollows to feed his babies, and lawmen swore he could fly, since he never left a clear trail in that dirt. It has always reminded me of struggle, somehow, and I will sleep in it, with the rest of my kin. But

Rick Bragg (left) acknowledges he'll never be a true man of the sea, but he's deeply drawn to the water, sand and city's pier (above), "where Fairhope comes together."

MATT EICH / AURORA SELECT (2)



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between now and then, I would like to walk in some sand.

I WENT TO the Alabama coast, to the eastern shore of Mobile Bay, to find a more forgiving soil, a shiftless kind that tides and waves just push around.

I found it in a town called Fairhope.

I never thought much about it, the name, till I saw the brown sand swirling around my feet under the amber-colored water ten years ago. A swarm of black minnows raced away, and when I was younger I might have scooped one up. This is an easy place, I remember thinking, a place where you can rearrange the earth with a single toe and the water will make it smooth again.

I did not want sugar white sand, because the developers and tourists have covered up a good part of the Alabama coast, pounded the dunes flat and blocked out the Gulf of Mexico and a large number of stars with high-rise condominiums. You see them all along the coast, jammed into once perfect sand, a thumb in the eye of God. What I wanted was bay sand, river sand, colored by meandering miles of dark water, a place tourists are leery to wade. I wanted a place I could rent, steal or stow away on a boat.

A town of about 17,000, Fairhope sits on bluffs that overlook the bay. It's not some pounded-out tortilla of a coastal town—all tacky T-shirt shops, spring break nitwits and $25 fried seafood platters—but a town with buildings that do not need a red light to warn low-flying aircraft and where a nice woman sells ripe cantaloupe from the tailgate of a pickup. This is a place where you can turn left without three light changes, prayer or smoking tires, where pelicans are as plentiful as pigeons and where you can buy, in one square mile, a gravy and biscuit, a barbecue sandwich, fresh-picked crabmeat, melt-in-your-mouth beignets, a Zebco fishing reel, a sheet of hurricane-proof plywood and a good shower head.

Some people call Fairhope an artist's colony, and that is true, since you cannot swing a dead cat without hitting a serious-faced novelist.

"It would be a lie to say I feel at home here," says Bragg (above: the Fairhope French Quarter known for its shops and galleries). "It is too quaint, too precious for that."

"Now, you have to look pretty carefully for a place on the coast to get the sand under your toes without somebody running over you with a Range Rover," said Skip Jones, who lives on the same bayfront lot, just south of Fairhope, his grandparents built on in 1939. "We may be gettin' to that point here, but not yet."

It would be a lie to say I feel at home here. It is too quaint, too precious for that, but it is a place to breathe. I have a rambling cypress house five minutes from the bay and a half-hour from the blue-green Gulf—even a big cow pasture near my house is closer to the waterfront than I am—but every day I walk by the water, and breathe.

It is, as most towns are, a little full of itself. Some people call it an artist's colony, and that is true, since you cannot swing a dead cat without hitting a serious-faced novelist. And there is money here, dusty money and Gucci money. There are shops where ladies in stiletto heels pay Bal Harbour prices for outfits that will be out of style before low tide, but these establishments can be fun, too. I like to stand outside the windows with paint on my sweat pants, tartar sauce on my T-shirt and see the shopgirls fret.

It had to change, of course, from the sleepy town it used to be, where every man, it seemed, knew the tides, when the air smelled from big, wet burlap bags of oysters and the only rich folks were those who came over on a ferry from Mobile to watch the sun set. But everybody is an interloper here, in a way. Sonny Brewer, a writer, came here in 1979 from Lamar County, in west central Alabama, and never really left. It was the late-afternoon sunlight, setting fire to the bay. "I was 30 years old," said Brewer. "I remember thinking, 'God, this is beautiful. How did I not know this was here?' And here I stay."

It is the water, too. The sand is just a path to it.

Here are the black currents of Fish River, highways of fresh and salt water, big bass gliding above in the fresher water, long trout lurking below in the

WILLIAM STARLING

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heavier, saltier depths. The Fish River empties into Weeks Bay, which, through a cut called Big Mouth, empties into Mobile Bay. Here, I caught a trout as long as my arm, and we cooked it in a skillet smoking with black pepper and ate it with roasted potatoes and coleslaw made with purple cabbage, carrots and a heaping double tablespoon of mayonnaise.

clear day, and at night you see a glow. I pointed to a yellow luminescence one night and proclaimed it to be Mobile, but a friend told me it was just the glow of a chemical plant. So now I tell people Mobile is "over yonder" somewhere.

You can see it best from the city pier, a quarter-mile long, its rails scarred from bait-cutting knives and stained with fish blood, its concrete

Mostly what I do here is look. I kick off my flip-flops and feel the sand, or just watch the sun sink like a ball of fire into the bay.

Fairhope offers culinary delights: barbecue sandwiches, melt-in-your-mouth beignets and fresh produce sold out of Barbara Davis' pickup truck.

Here is the Magnolia River, one of the last places in America where the mail is delivered by a man in a boat, where in one bend in the river there is a deep, cold place once believed to have no bottom at all. You can see blue crabs the size of salad plates when the tides are right, and shrimp as big as a harmonica. Along the banks are houses on stilts or set far back, because the rivers flood higher than a man is tall, but the trees still crowd the banks, and it looks like something from *The African Queen*—or the Amazon.

Then, of course, there is the bay. You can see the skyscrapers of Mobile on a

floor speckled with scales. This is where Fairhope comes together, to walk, hold hands. It is here I realized I could never be a real man of the sea, as I watched a fat man expertly throw a cast net off the pier, at bait fish. The net fanned out in a perfect oval, carried by lead weights around its mouth, and when he pulled it in it was shining silver with minnows. I tried it once and it was like throwing a wadded-up hamburger sack at the sea.

So I buy my bait and feel fine. But mostly what I do here is look. I kick off my flip-flops and feel the sand, or just watch the sun sink like a ball of fire into the bay itself. I root for the pelicans, marvel at how they locate a fish on a low pass, make an easy half-circle climb into the air, then plummet into the bay.

I wonder sometimes if I love this so because I was born so far from the sea, in that red dirt, but people who have been here a lifetime say no, it is not something you get tired of. They tell you why, in stories that always seem to begin with "I remember . . . "

"I remember when I was about 10 years old, maybe 8, my mother and sisters and I went through Bon Secour and some guy in a little boat had caught a sawfish," said Skip Jones. "And I thought this thing can't be real—like I felt when they walked on the moon."

A lifetime later he is still looking in the water. "Last year I went out on the walk one morning at about 6 o'clock, and I looked down and there were a dozen rays, and I looked harder and they were all over the place, hundreds of them. Well, we have a lot of small rays, but these had a different, broader head. And I went inside and looked 'em up and saw that they were cownose rays that congregate around estuaries. I called my friend Jimbo Meador and told him what I saw, and he said, 'Yeah, I saw them this morning.' They came in a cloud and then they were just gone. I don't know where. I guess to Jimbo's house."

I would like to tell people stories of the bay, the rivers, the sea, tell them what I remember. But the best I can do is a story about cows. I was driving with my family to the bay, where a bookseller and friend named Martin Lanaux had invited us to watch the Fourth of July fireworks from his neighborhood pier. As we passed the cow pasture, the dark sky exploded with color, and every cow, every one, it seemed, stood looking up at it. It was one of the nicer moments in my life, and I didn't even get my feet wet.

RICK BRAGG *is the author of* The Prince of Frogtown, *now in paperback,* All Over but the Shoutin' *and* Ava's Man.

MATT EICH / AURORA SELECT

Read more contributions to My Kind of Town at Smithsonian.com/mykindoftown

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Around the Mall

SCENES AND SIGHTINGS FROM THE SMITHSONIAN MUSEUMS AND BEYOND

In a sequel to the 2006 hit, Ben Stiller reprises his role as a hapless night watchman.

DOANE GREGORY / 20TH CENTURY FOX

LIGHTS! CAMERA! HISTORY?

CAST, CREW AND CURATORS TAKE US BEHIND THE SCENES DURING THE FILMING OF *NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM: BATTLE OF THE SMITHSONIAN*

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FROM THE CASTLE

Lincoln Login

G. WAYNE CLOUGH

LINCOLN LAY DYING, having been shot ten hours before. He breathed his last, diarist Mary Henry recorded, at 7:30 A.M. on April 15, 1865, with a "faint hardly perceptible motion in his throat. . . . So still was the room that the ticking of the President's watch was distinctly heard." Who was with him? Not Henry. Her vivid diary entry drew on what Lincoln's pastor, the Rev. Phineas D. Gurley, had told her. Gurley also said he broke the news to Mary Todd Lincoln, the first lady, "in the parlor below." How then to explain *Death of Abraham Lincoln*, the well-known 1868 oil painting, which depicts Mrs. Lincoln in a large room full of dignitaries?

Historians often must draw conclusions based on conflicting evidence, and starting this past February the Smithsonian Community of Learners— 4,192 teachers, their students, librarians and history buffs in 1,631 cities and 69 countries—took up the Lincoln death painting in an online conference. At one point Smithsonian historian Pamela Henson uploaded a photograph, taken just after Lincoln's body was removed, of the very small room (about 8 by 11 feet) where the 16th president had died. So much for the painting! It turns out

In an online conference, students learned to distinguish between myth (left: an 1868 painting of Lincoln's death) and reality (right: the room in which he died).

to be less an accurate portrayal than a roll call of the people who came to Lincoln's bedside all through the night and early the next morning.

Mary Henry's diary is just one of many Smithsonian artifacts illuminating Lincoln's life available through the pan-institutional "connections" project at www.goSmithsonian.com/SIConnections; the continuing online Lincoln conference is available at www.smithsonianeducation.org. These two Web initiatives underscore the conclusions of a National Research Council report that emphasize the value of museum exhibits and collections, interactive dialogue and group participation. The huge potential of informal education is now within our grasp through online interactions with curators, scholars and historians. Web technologies now make geographical distances disappear; teachers and students all over the world are able to learn from each other in sustained dialogue.

Educators in my hometown of Douglas, Georgia (metropolitan population about 50,000), have joined the ever-growing Smithsonian Community of Learners. As Douglas high-school teacher Lorraine Fussell said of the Lincoln conference: "Most valuable to my students (and to me) were the responses [by Smithsonian historian and blogger Courtney Esposito and others] to several of our comments. In high-school lingo, that was 'cool.'" We welcome everyone to our next online conference, in the fall; it will be about climate change.

G. WAYNE CLOUGH *is Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.*

Smithsonian Institution

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G. Wayne Clough

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CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY (2)

FLIGHTS OF FANCY

IN A NOVEL COLLABORATION, CURATORS AND FILMMAKERS BRING THE WRIGHT FLYER AND OTHER MUSEUM ICONS TO LIFE

THE WRIGHT FLYER—perhaps the most famous airplane in the world—rests in a place of honor on the second floor of the National Air and Space Museum. In 1903, with Wilbur Wright at the controls, it flew at an altitude of ten feet in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. More than a century later, museum curator Bob van der Linden watched in awe as the Flyer zoomed down the museum's upstairs hallway before diving over the balcony and soaring out of the building. "Here," he says, "is where you bite your lip and remember: this is a fantasy."

Van der Linden was getting a glimpse of an animated sequence from *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian* (a sequel to 2006's *Night at the Museum*), in which artifacts and historical figures come to life. The movie, which opens nationwide May 22, reunites audiences with night watchman Larry Daley (Ben Stiller), who, in the new film, strikes up a romance with Amelia Earhart (Amy Adams).

"I was thrilled to see that the real Smithsonian was cooler than what it was in my head," says director Shawn Levy, whose film crew descended upon the National Mall for four days and nights in May 2008. He was especially enthralled by the gothic Castle—the Smithsonian Institution's original building, now an office complex and information center—which Levy reimagined as an evil fortress where a villainous Egyptian pharaoh (Hank Azaria) sits on a throne (Archie Bunker's chair) atop a pile of looted museum treasures.

Still, as befits a love story featuring America's most famous aviatrix, much of the action takes place at the Air and Space Museum, where curators are no strangers to movie crews—particularly documentary filmmakers, who sometimes have difficulty grasping the museum maxim *look but don't touch*. "We've had film crews who want to climb inside the airplanes or want to move the airplanes around," says Van der Linden. "Levy's crew did not. We were very pleased—and surprised."

The biggest surprises, though, would come a month later, after Levy and his creative team wrapped up their location filming in the nation's capital. Three thousand miles away, on a soundstage in Vancouver, Van der Linden and fellow curator Margaret Weitekamp found themselves standing within the museum's look-alike, painstakingly recreated by production designer Claude Paré. While in Washington, Paré had spent two weeks snapping some 2,000 reference photographs and taking notes that detailed everything from the objects on display to the number-coded shelving systems used by museum archivists. "I really sat down and said, 'Oh my God, this is a huge undertaking,'" Paré says. "I was a little shaken."

When Weitekamp first visited the mock-up museum, she was greeted by a bizarre sight. "That man has a monkey on his head!" she exclaimed. The capucin monkey was a cast member playing Able—NASA's 1959 primate astronaut—and had climbed atop its handler. Paré then led the two curators on a tour of the set. "It was fascinating to see the liberties

20TH CENTURY FOX

In a computer-animated sequence from the film (above), the 1903 Wright Flyer is transformed into a trick-turning, aerial acrobat.

Want more film fanfare? Get it at Smithsonian.com/nightatthemuseum

Q&A

Actress **AMY ADAMS**, 34, has appeared in 25 films and received two Academy Award nominations—most recently for her role as a young nun in 2008's *Doubt*. In *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian*, she plays Amelia Earhart. Adams spoke with *SMITHSONIAN*'s Beth Py-Lieberman.

DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN AMELIA EARHART?

I think most women do. There's a sense of fun and a sense of adventure that she represents—a woman succeeding in a man's world.

WHAT DID YOU THINK ABOUT THE EARHART EXHIBIT?

We did our shooting in the Air and Space Museum at night, which allowed me to have an intimate experience with the exhibit. When you see how small her plane was, you really understand her fortitude. And the more research I did about her, the more I liked her. When people would ask her, "Why do you fly?" she would say, "For the fun of it." I think that's something that gets lost when you first learn about Amelia. It was her spirit more than anything that we were trying to capture.

DID ANY OTHER EXHIBITIONS STAND OUT?

The one that somewhat startled me was the plaster life mask of Abraham Lincoln [made by sculptor Leonard Wells Volk in 1917]. That was probably one of my favorites because I've only seen Lincoln in photos and I could imagine what he must have looked like back then. I was so moved by it.

YOU ONCE SAID: "I FIND THAT EVERY FILM I DO BECOMES A DEEPLY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, AND MY OWN LIFE BEGINS TO MANIFEST THESE WEIRD REALITIES." ANYTHING WEIRD TO REPORT AFTER YOU FINISHED THIS FILM?

Not necessarily weird, but Amelia is a lot more of a spitfire than anyone I'd ever played before—a lot more confident. That definitely manifested itself, in terms of speaking my mind, diving headfirst into situations and sort of throwing caution to the wind.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE MOMENT FILMING?

I really loved it when, in one scene, Ben Stiller and I were up on the Lincoln Memorial at night and no one else was there. We were able to look over Washington while there was a full moon. It was just a beautiful evening.

NO MAJOR MOVIE HAS BEEN SHOT INSIDE THE SMITHSONIAN UNTIL NOW. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BEING IN THE FIRST ONE?

I think it's awesome. In this day and age, when kids can access the Internet, it sometimes deprives them of the impact—and inspiration—that comes from seeing something in person. When I heard we were actually going to shoot in the Smithsonian, I hoped that it would get kids excited to go and actually see these exhibits for themselves and then learn about history and art.

IN THE FILM, ARTIFACTS AND HISTORICAL FIGURES COME TO LIFE. IS THERE ANY MAGIC TO BE FOUND IN A REAL MUSEUM?

Oh, yeah. The beauty of museums is that when you're in them and take the time to really look at the exhibits, they come to life in your imagination. That is the magic.

they took—pulling objects from all different parts of the museum and putting them all into one big room—and at the same time having a sense of fidelity to the museum itself," says Weitekamp. The fenestrated walls, which in the real museum expose the exhibits to sunlight, were replaced with walls designed to look like solid limestone. ("Which, actually, is a better way of making a museum, to be honest with you," says Van der Linden.) Paré and his design team even went so far as to impose 30 years' worth of simulated wear on the set's recreated brass handrails.

The two curators brought home no souvenirs, but the Institution will dis-

"It was fascinating to see the liberties" the crew took, says Margaret Weitekamp (with Bob van der Linden and the Wright Flyer).

play one of the film's key props—the evil pharaoh's "pile of loot"—in the Castle through September. National Museum of American History curator of entertainment Dwight Blocker Bowers is both amused and horrified by the very idea of iconic artifacts—even reproductions of iconic artifacts—piled in a heap. But, like the other curators, he hopes the film will stimulate public interest in the Smithsonian and other museums. And, just possibly, he adds, "show that we have a sense of humor."

JESSE RHODES

20TH CENTURY FOX; SEAN MCCORMICK

What's Up

DIPLOMATIC GESTURES

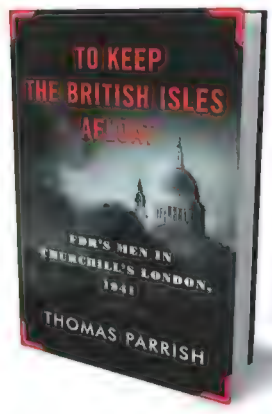
A buffalo horn adorned with gold and precious stones is among the 65 gifts bestowed to 16th- and 17th-century Russian czars by Turkish and Iranian diplomats. At the Sackler Gallery through September 13.

SETTLE DOWN

Some 150 European and Native American artifacts from the early North American settlements of Jamestown, Quebec and Santa Fe (above: 17th-century ceramic tile found in Jamestown) are on exhibit at the Ripley Center until October 31.

ALLIED FORCES

To Keep the British Isles Afloat: FDR's Men in Churchill's London, 1941 by Thomas Parrish (below: Smithsonian Books, 2009) details the roles of presidential adviser Harry Hopkins and financier Averell Harriman in aiding England against Nazi Germany.



AN ARTISTIC PRESENCE

In 1899, Alice Pike Barney (1857-1931), a Washington D.C. painter, opened a salon in Paris that became a popular artist hangout. Her self-portrait (below: 1906) is one of 70 American paintings now on view indefinitely at the Renwick Gallery's Grand Salon.

BY JOSEPH CAPUTO

RAINBOW BRIGHT

California artist Walead Beshty creates oversized photograms (produced by placing objects on photosensitive paper) including *Six Color Curl* (left: 2008). See 11 works at his "Directions" project at the Hirshhorn through September 13.

MOSCOW KREMLIN MUSEUMS / SACKLER GALLERY, SI; NMAH, SI; SI BOOKS; RENWICK GALLERY / SAAM; HIRSHHORN MUSEUM, SI

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For an insider's look at the Smithsonian, visit Smithsonian.com/mallblog

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What should I know about treating arthritis pain?

For many with arthritis pain, not treating is not an option. All prescription NSAID pain relievers, like Celebrex, ibuprofen and naproxen, help treat arthritis pain and have some of the same warnings. But since individual results may vary, having options is important.

Why should I consider Celebrex?

Prescription Celebrex has been the option for millions of patients for 10 straight years. Just one 200-mg Celebrex can provide dependable, 24-hour relief for many with arthritis pain, stiffness and inflammation. Based on the available data, the FDA stated that for certain patients Celebrex's benefits outweigh the risks. But only you and your doctor can make that decision.

What if I have a sensitive stomach?

If you are worried about stomach upset, you should know, in clinical studies, a lower percentage of patients taking Celebrex reported stomach discomfort, which includes indigestion, abdominal pain, and nausea, versus prescription ibuprofen and naproxen. However, all prescription NSAIDs, including Celebrex, increase the chance of stomach and intestine problems, such as bleeding and ulcers which can occur without warning and may cause death. With any of these medicines, patients also taking aspirin and the elderly are at increased risk for stomach bleeding and ulcers.

And if I'm taking low-dose aspirin?

If you are taking low-dose aspirin for your heart and need an NSAID pain reliever, Celebrex can be used because it doesn't interfere with the effects of low-dose aspirin. Ask your doctor if your NSAID pain reliever can be taken with low-dose aspirin.

But aren't there cardiovascular risks associated with NSAID use?

The FDA requires all prescription NSAIDs, including Celebrex, ibuprofen, naproxen and meloxicam, to have the same cardiovascular warning. They all may increase the chance of heart attack or stroke, which can lead to death. This chance increases if you have heart disease or risk factors for it such as high blood pressure or when NSAIDs are taken for long periods. Additionally, taking low-dose aspirin may not reduce the cardiovascular risk associated with NSAID use.

Any other precautions?

All prescription NSAIDs, including Celebrex, should be used at the lowest dose possible, for the shortest time, based on your individual treatment goals. Do not take Celebrex if you're pregnant or if you're allergic to aspirin or sulfonamides. All prescription NSAIDs, including Celebrex, increase the chance of serious skin reactions. And tell your doctor if you've had kidney or liver problems.

What should I do next?

Visit celebrex.com or call 1-888-celebrex. Ask your doctor if you could benefit from Celebrex. But most importantly, your doctor can tell you about the risks and benefits of all prescription NSAID pain relievers, including Celebrex.

Please turn page to see important information about Celebrex and other prescription NSAIDs.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Talk to your doctor to... Understand the risks. Feel the b

benefits. Un

Understand the risks. F

Uninsured? Need help paying for Pfizer medicines? Pfizer has programs that can help. Call **1-866-706-2400** or visit **www.PfizerHelpfulAnswers.com.**

Pfizer helpful answers

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Visit www.celebrex.com or call 1-888-celebrex.

CELEBREX®
(CELECOXIB CAPSULES) 100 mg 200 mg

CELEBREX®
(celecoxib capsules)

Medication Guide
for Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

(See the end of this Medication Guide for a list of prescription NSAID medicines.)

What is the most important information I should know about medicines called Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?

NSAID medicines may increase the chance of a heart attack or stroke that can lead to death.

This chance increases:

- with longer use of NSAID medicines
- in people who have heart disease

NSAID medicines should never be used right before or after a heart surgery called a "coronary artery bypass graft (CABG)."

NSAID medicines can cause ulcers and bleeding in the stomach and intestines at any time during treatment. Ulcers and bleeding:

- can happen without warning symptoms
- may cause death

The chance of a person getting an ulcer or bleeding increases with:

- taking medicines called "corticosteroids" and "anticoagulants"
- longer use
- smoking
- drinking alcohol
- older age
- having poor health

NSAID medicines should only be used:

- exactly as prescribed
- at the lowest dose possible for your treatment
- for the shortest time needed

What are Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?

NSAID medicines are used to treat pain and redness, swelling, and heat (inflammation) from medical conditions such as:

- different types of arthritis
- menstrual cramps and other types of short-term pain

Who should not take a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID)?

Do not take an NSAID medicine:

- if you had an asthma attack, hives, or other allergic reaction with aspirin or any other NSAID medicine
- for pain right before or after heart bypass surgery

Tell your healthcare provider:

- about all of your medical conditions.
- about all of the medicines you take. NSAIDs and some other medicines can interact with each other and cause serious side effects. **Keep a list of your medicines to show to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.**
- if you are pregnant. **NSAID medicines should not be used by pregnant women late in their pregnancy.**
- if you are breastfeeding. **Talk to your doctor.**

What are the possible side effects of Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?

Serious side effects include:	**Other side effects include:**
• heart attack • stroke • high blood pressure • heart failure from body swelling (fluid retention) • kidney problems including kidney failure • bleeding and ulcers in the stomach and intestine • low red blood cells (anemia) • life-threatening skin reactions • life-threatening allergic reactions • liver problems including liver failure • asthma attacks in people who have asthma	• stomach pain • constipation • diarrhea • gas • heartburn • nausea • vomiting • dizziness

Get emergency help right away if you have any of the following symptoms:

- shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- chest pain
- weakness in one part or side of your body
- slurred speech
- swelling of the face or throat

Stop your NSAID medicine and call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following symptoms:

- nausea
- more tired or weaker than usual
- itching
- your skin or eyes look yellow
- stomach pain
- flu-like symptoms
- vomit blood
- there is blood in your bowel movement or it is black and sticky like tar
- skin rash or blisters with fever
- unusual weight gain
- swelling of the arms and legs, hands and feet

These are not all the side effects with NSAID medicines. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information about NSAID medicines.

Other information about Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

- Aspirin is an NSAID medicine but it does not increase the chance of a heart attack. Aspirin can cause bleeding in the brain, stomach, and intestines. Aspirin can also cause ulcers in the stomach and intestines.
- Some of these NSAID medicines are sold in lower doses without a prescription (over-the-counter). Talk to your healthcare provider before using over-the-counter NSAIDs for more than 10 days.

NSAID medicines that need a prescription

Generic Name	Tradename
Celecoxib	Celebrex
Diclofenac	Cataflam, Voltaren, Arthrotec (combined with misoprostol)
Diflunisal	Dolobid
Etodolac	Lodine, Lodine XL
Fenoprofen	Nalfon, Nalfon 200
Flurbiprofen	Ansaid
Ibuprofen	Motrin, Tab-Profen, Vicoprofen* (combined with hydrocodone), Combunox (combined with oxycodone)
Indomethacin	Indocin, Indocin SR, Indo-Lemmon, Indomethagan
Ketoprofen	Oruvail
Ketorolac	Toradol
Mefenamic Acid	Ponstel
Meloxicam	Mobic
Nabumetone	Relafen
Naproxen	Naprosyn, Anaprox, Anaprox DS, EC-Naproxyn, Naprelan, Naprapac (copackaged with lansoprazole)
Oxaprozin	Daypro
Piroxicam	Feldene
Sulindac	Clinoril
Tolmetin	Tolectin, Tolectin DS, Tolectin 600

*Vicoprofen contains the same dose of ibuprofen as over-the-counter (OTC) NSAIDs, and is usually used for less than 10 days to treat pain. The OTC NSAID label warns that long term continuous use may increase the risk of heart attack or stroke.

This Medication Guide has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

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THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

JUNE ANNIVERSARIES
MOMENTOUS OR MERELY MEMORABLE

BY ALISON McLEAN

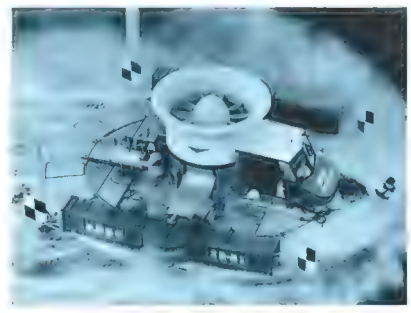
20 YEARS AGO
CRACKDOWN

Seven weeks of protests by students and dissidents to spur democratic reforms in China end in violence June 3 and 4, 1989, when Chinese soldiers open fire on demonstrators gathered in and around Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Deaths are estimated in the hundreds, casualties in the thousands. The action ushers in an era of political repression and economic reforms.

Visit Smithsonian.com/history for "Today in History"

90 YEARS AGO
WINGING IT

British pilot John Alcock, 26 (right in photo), and navigator Arthur Brown, 32, crash-land their modified Vickers Vimy biplane in a swamp near Clifden, Ireland, June 15, 1919—16 hours and 12 minutes after departing St. John's, Newfoundland. The pair thus become the first to fly nonstop across the Atlantic Ocean, eight years before Lindbergh does so alone. The two struggled in dense fog and snow. "Once . . . we saw the green Atlantic only 30 feet below," Alcock relates. They win £10,000 and are knighted by King George V. Alcock dies in a plane crash later that year, Brown in 1948.

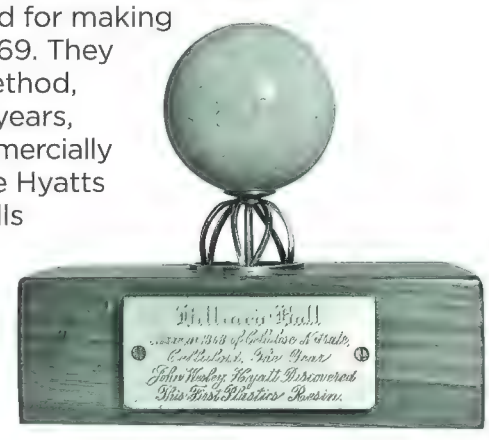


50 YEARS AGO
CHANNEL SURFING

Four years after British engineer Christopher Cockerell used a cat-food tin inside a coffee can to test an idea for a vehicle that could move over land and water on a cushion of air, his hovercraft debuts June 11, 1959, on the waters near England's Isle of Wight. Built by Saunders Roe Ltd., the *SRN.1*—which "huffs and puffs like a vacuum cleaner in reverse," according to one newspaper—flies through maneuvers at 25 knots. Weeks later the "flying saucer," as it is quickly known, crosses the English Channel. More than 80 million people will make the same trip by hovercraft before service ends in 2000.

140 YEARS AGO TAKING THEIR CUE

American printer John Wesley Hyatt and his brother Isaiah, inspired by a contest to make a synthetic-ivory billiard ball, patent a method for making "solid collodion" June 15, 1869. They lose the contest, but the method, tweaked over the next few years, yields celluloid, the first commercially successful plastic, which the Hyatts market for use in billiard balls and other products, from dental plates to piano keys. By the 1890s, strips of the stuff will become the basis for a photographic revolution: film.



150 YEARS AGO WALKING DISTANCE

Thousands of spectators flock from Buffalo to Niagara Falls June 30, 1859, to watch French funambulist Jean François Gravelet, a.k.a. the "Great Blondin," become the first person to cross the Niagara River gorge on a tightrope. After coolly sitting down halfway across the 1,150-foot-wide chasm for a drink, Blondin finally attains the Canadian shore. "I have got safely over. I see you are very glad. So am I," he tells the crowd before heading back the way he came. He dies—in bed—in 1897, age 73.

NEWSCOM; JACQUES LANGEVIN / SYGMA / CORBIS; THE HOVERCRAFT MUSEUM TRUST; NMAH, SI; HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION / CORBIS

Smithsonian
JUNE 2009 · VOLUME 40, NUMBER 3

Sons and daughters of the Vietnam conflict claim roots on two continents. Jimmy Miller (above: with his twin girls in Spokane) reunited with his father, retired Army Sgt. Maj. James Miller II, in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Children *of the* Dust

Born overseas to Vietnamese mothers and U.S. servicemen, Amerasians brought hard-won resilience to their new lives in the United States

BY DAVID LAMB

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CATHERINE KARNOW

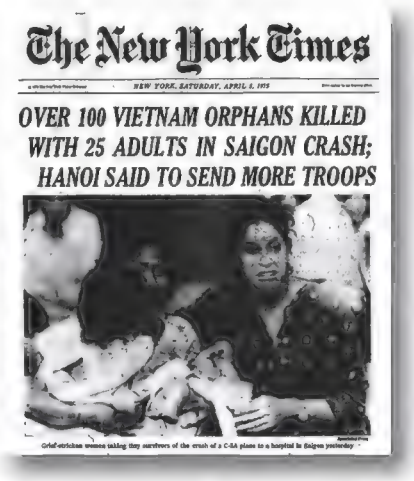
They grew up as the leftovers of an unpopular war, straddling two worlds but belonging to neither. Most never knew their fathers. Many were abandoned by their mothers at the gates of orphanages. Some were discarded in garbage cans. Schoolmates taunted and pummeled them and mocked the features that gave them the face of the enemy—round blue eyes and light skin, or dark skin and tight curly hair if their soldier-dads were African-Americans. Their destiny was to become waifs and beggars, living in the streets and parks of South Vietnam's cities, sustained by a single dream: to get to America and find their fathers.

But neither America nor Vietnam wanted the kids known as Amerasians and commonly dismissed by the Vietnamese as "children of the dust"—as insignificant as a speck to be brushed aside. "The care and welfare of these unfortunate children . . . has never been and is not now considered an area of government responsibility," the U.S. Defense Department said in a 1970 statement. "Our society does not need these bad elements," the Vietnamese director of social welfare in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) said a decade later. As adults, some Amerasians would say that they felt cursed from the start. When, in early April 1975, Saigon was falling to Communist troops from the north and rumors spread that southerners associated with the United States might be massacred, President Gerald Ford announced plans to evacuate 2,000 orphans, many of them Amerasians. Operation Babylift's first official flight crashed in the rice paddies outside Saigon, killing 144 people, most of them children. South Vietnamese soldiers and civilians gathered at the site, some to help, others to loot the dead. Despite the crash, the evacuation program continued another three weeks.

"I remember that flight, the one that crashed," says Nguyen Thi Phuong Thuy. "I was about 6, and I'd been playing in the trash near the orphanage. I remember holding the nun's hand and crying when we heard. It was like we were all born under a dark star." She paused to dab at her eyes with tissue. Thuy, whom I met on a trip to Vietnam in March 2008, said she had never tried to locate her parents because she had no idea where to start. She recalls her adoptive Vietnamese parents arguing about her, the husband shouting, "Why did you have to get an Amerasian?" She was soon sent off to live with another family.

Thuy seemed pleased to find someone interested in her travails. Over coffee and Cokes in a hotel lobby, she spoke in a soft, flat voice about the "half-breed dog" taunts she heard from neighbors, of being denied a ration card for food, of sneaking out of her village before others rose at sunrise to sit alone on the beach for hours and about taking sleeping pills at night to forget the day. Her hair was long and black, her face angular and attractive. She wore jeans and a T-shirt. She looked as American as anyone I might have passed in the streets of Des Moines or Denver. Like most Amerasians still in Vietnam, she was uneducated and unskilled. In 1992 she met another Amerasian orphan, Nguyen Anh Tuan, who said to her, "We don't have a parent's love. We are farmers and poor. We should take care of each other." They married and had two daughters and a son, now 11, whom Thuy imagines as the very image of the American father she has never seen. "What would he say today if he knew he had a daughter and now a grandson waiting for him in Vietnam?" she asked.

A plane crash in 1975 brought world attention to the plight of Amerasians.


The New York Times

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 1975

OVER 100 VIETNAM ORPHANS KILLED WITH 25 ADULTS IN SAIGON CRASH; HANOI SAID TO SEND MORE TROOPS

Grief-stricken women taking the survivors of the crash of a C-5A plane to a hospital in Saigon yesterday

"I remember that flight, the one that crashed. I remember holding the nun's hand and crying when we heard. It was like we were all born under a dark star."

NO ONE KNOWS HOW MANY AMERASIANS were born—and ultimately left behind in Vietnam—during the decade-long war that ended in 1975. In Vietnam's conservative society, where premarital chastity is traditionally observed and ethnic homogeneity embraced, many births of children resulting from liaisons with foreigners went unregistered. According to the Amerasian Independent Voice of America and the Amerasian Fellowship Association, advocacy groups recently formed in the United States, no more than a few hundred Amerasians remain in Vietnam; the groups would like to bring all of them to the United States. The others—some 26,000 men and women now in their 30s and 40s, together with 75,000 Vietnamese they claimed as relatives—began to be resettled in the United States after Representative Stewart B. McKinney of Connecticut called their abandonment a "national embarrassment" in 1980 and urged fellow Americans to take responsibility for them.

But no more than 3 percent found their fathers in their adoptive homeland. Good jobs were scarce. Some Amerasians were vulnerable to drugs, became gang members and ended up in jail. As many as half remained illiterate or semi-illiterate in both Vietnamese and English and never

Thousands of mixed-parentage children, who were left behind when Americans departed Vietnam, were raised as orphans. Nguyen Thi Phuong Thuy (opposite: in hammock, in Ho Chi Minh City) knows only that her father was an American soldier.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

became U.S. citizens. The mainstream Vietnamese-American population looked down on them, assuming that their mothers were prostitutes—which was sometimes the case, though many of the children were products of longer-term, loving relationships, including marriages. Mention Amerasians and people would roll their eyes and recite an old saying in Vietnam: Children without a father are like a home without a roof.

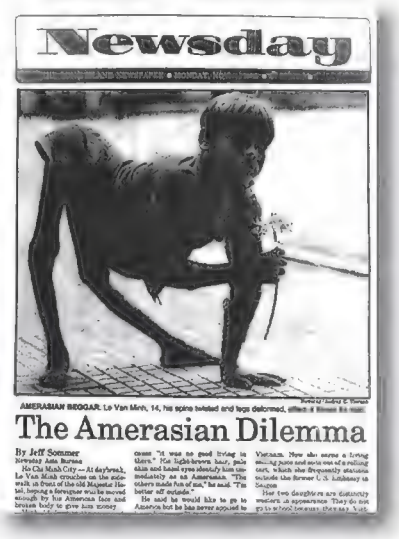
The massacres that President Ford had feared never took place, but the Communists who came south after 1975 to govern a reunited Vietnam were hardly benevolent rulers. Many orphanages were closed, and Amerasians and other youngsters were sent off to rural work farms and re-education camps. The Communists confiscated wealth and property and razed many of the homes of those who had supported the American-backed government of South Vietnam. Mothers of Amerasian children destroyed or hid photographs, letters and official papers that offered evidence of their American connections. "My mother burned everything," says William Tran, now a 38-year-old computer engineer in Illinois. "She said, 'I can't have a son named William with the Viet Cong around.' It was as though your whole identity was swept away." Tran came to the United States in 1990 after his mother remarried and his stepfather threw him out of the house.

HOI TRINH WAS STILL A SCHOOLBOY in the turbulent postwar years when he and his schoolteacher parents, both Vietnamese, were uprooted in Saigon and, joining an exodus of two million southerners, were forced into one of the "new economic zones" to be farmers. He remembers taunting Amerasians. Why? "It didn't occur to me then how cruel it was. It was really a matter of following the crowd, of copying how society as a whole viewed them. They looked so different than us. . . . They weren't from a family. They were poor. They mostly lived on the street and didn't go to school like us."

I asked Trinh how Amerasians had responded to being confronted in those days. "From what I remember," he said, "they would just look down and walk away."

Trinh eventually left Vietnam with his family, went to Australia and became a lawyer. When I first met him, in 1998, he was 28 and working out of his bedroom in a cramped Manila apartment he shared with 16 impoverished Amerasians and other Vietnamese refugees. He was representing, pro bono, 200 or so Amerasians and their family members scattered through the Philippines, negotiating their futures with the U.S. Embassy in Manila. For a decade, the Philippines had been a sort of halfway house where Amerasians could spend six months, learning English and preparing for their new lives in the United States. But U.S. officials had revoked the visas of these 200 for a variety of reasons—fighting, excessive use of alcohol, medical problems, "anti-social" behavior. Vietnam would not take them back and the Manila government maintained that the Philippines was only a transit center. They lived in a stateless twilight zone. But over the course of five years, Trinh managed to get most of the Amerasians and scores of Vietnamese boat people trapped in the Philippines resettled in the United States, Australia, Canada and Norway.

A 1985 photograph of street boy Le Van Minh galvanized a movement.


Newsday

AMERASIAN BEGGAR: Le Van Minh, 14, his spine twisted and legs deformed, offers a flower for sale.

The Amerasian Dilemma

By Jeff Sommer
Newsday Asia Bureau

Ho Chi Minh City — At daybreak, Le Van Minh crouches on the sidewalk in front of the old Majestic Hotel, begging a foreigner who moved enough by his American face and broken body to give him money.

cause "it was no good living in there." Not light-brown hair, pale skin and hazel eyes identify him immediately as an Amerasian. "The others made fun of me," he said. "I'm better off outside."

He said he would like to go to America but he has never applied to

Vietnam. Now she earns a living selling pens and sells out of a rolling cart, which she frequently abandons to elude the Saigon U.S. Embassy in Saigon.

Her two daughters are distinctly American in appearance. They do not go to school because they say they

When one of the Amerasians in a Philippine refugee camp committed suicide, Trinh adopted the man's 4-year-old son and helped him become an Australian citizen. "It wasn't until I went to the Philippines that I learned of the Amerasians' issues and ordeals in Vietnam," Trinh told me. "I've always believed that what you sow is what you get. If we are treated fairly and with tenderness, we will grow up being exactly like that. If we are wronged and discriminated against and abused in our childhood, like some of the Amerasians were, chances are we will grow up not being able to think, rationalize or function like other 'normal' people."

Audrey Tiernan felt a tug on her pant leg. "I thought it was a dog or a cat," she recalled. "I looked down and there was Minh. It broke my heart."

AFTER BEING DEFEATED at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and forced to withdraw from Vietnam after nearly a century of colonial rule, France quickly evacuated 25,000 Vietnamese children of French parentage and gave them citizenship. For Amerasians the journey to a new life would be much tougher. About 500 of them left for the United States with Hanoi's approval in 1982 and 1983, but Hanoi and Washington—which did not then have diplomatic relations—could not agree on what to do with the vast majority who remained in Vietnam. Hanoi insisted they were American citizens who were not discriminated against and thus could not be classified as political refugees. Washington, like Hanoi, wanted to use the Amerasians as leverage for settling larger issues between the two countries. Not until 1986, in secret negotiations covering a range of disagreements, did Washington and Hanoi hold direct talks on Amerasians' future.

But by then the lives of an American photographer, a New York congressman, a group of high-school students in Long Island and a 14-year-old Amerasian boy named Le Van Minh had unexpectedly intertwined to change the course of history.

In October 1985, *Newsday* photographer Audrey Tiernan, age 30, on assignment in Ho Chi Minh City, felt a tug on her

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DAVID LAMB *wrote about Singapore in the September 2007 issue.*
CATHERINE KARNOW, *born and raised in Hong Kong, has photographed extensively in Vietnam.*

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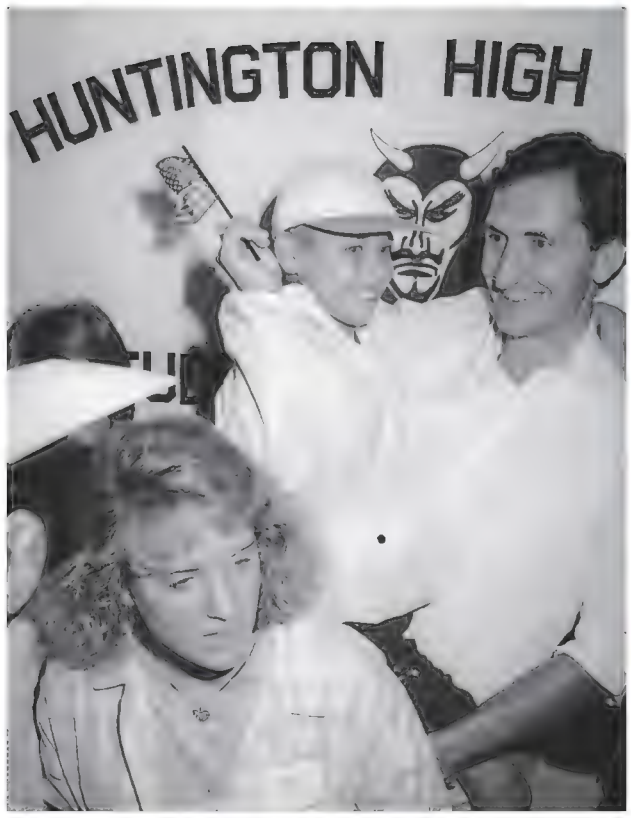


Moved by a *Newsday* photograph of Le Van Minh, students at a Long Island high school urged Rep. Robert Mrazek (carrying Minh from a plane in 1987) to bring the youngster to the United States. Today, Minh (right: at home in San Jose) is married with children of his own.

pant leg. "I thought it was a dog or a cat," she recalled. "I looked down and there was Minh. It broke my heart." Minh, with long lashes, hazel eyes, a few freckles and a handsome Caucasian face, moved like a crab on all four limbs, likely the result of polio. Minh's mother had thrown him out of the house at the age of 10, and at the end of each day his friend, Thi, would carry the stricken boy on his back to an alleyway where they slept. On that day in 1985, Minh looked up at Tiernan with a hint of a wistful smile and held out a flower he had fashioned from the aluminum wrapper in a pack of cigarettes. The photograph Tiernan snapped of him was printed in newspapers around the world.

The next year, four students from Huntington High School in Long Island saw the picture and decided to do something. They collected 27,000 signatures on a petition to bring Minh to the United States for medical attention. They asked Tiernan and their congressman, Robert Mrazek, for help.

"Funny, isn't it, how something that changed so many lives emanated from the idealism of some high-school kids," says Mrazek, who left Congress in 1992 and now writes historical fiction and nonfiction. Mrazek recalls telling the students that getting Minh to the United States was unlikely. Vietnam and the United States were enemies and had no official contacts; at this low point, immigration had completely stopped. Humanitarian considerations carried no weight. "I went back to Washington feeling very guilty," he says. "The students had come to see me thinking their congressman could change the world and I, in effect, had told them I couldn't." But, he asked himself, would it be possible to find someone at the U.S. State Department and someone from Vietnam's delegation to the United Nations willing to make an exception? Mrazek began making phone calls and writing letters.

Several months later, in May 1987, he flew to Ho Chi Minh City. Mrazek had found a senior Vietnamese official who thought that helping Minh might lead to improved relations with the United States, and the congressman had persuaded a majority of his colleagues in the House of Representatives to press for help with Minh's visa. He could bring the boy home with him. Mrazek had hardly set his feet on Vietnamese soil before the kids were tagging along. They were Amerasians. Some called him "Daddy." They tugged at his hand to direct him to the shuttered church where they lived. Another 60 or 70 Amerasians were camped in the yard. The refrain Mrazek kept hearing was, "I want to go to the land of my father."

"It just hit me," Mrazek says. "We weren't talking about just the one boy. There were lots of these kids, and they were painful reminders to the Vietnamese of the war and all it had cost them. I thought, 'Well, we're bringing one back. Let's bring them all back, at least the ones who want to come.' "

Two hundred Huntington High students were on hand

LEFT: BETTMANN / CORBIS

Retired Dallas policeman Dam Trung Thao (above: with Jimmy Miller in Dallas) shares stories about the vulnerable Amerasian youths he was able to steer away from the temptations of gangs and drugs in their new homeland.

to greet Minh, Mrazek and Tiernan when their plane landed at New York's Kennedy International Airport.

Mrazek had arranged for two of his Centerport, New York, neighbors, Gene and Nancy Kinney, to be Minh's foster parents. They took him to orthopedists and neurologists, but his muscles were so atrophied "there was almost nothing left in his legs," Nancy says. When Minh was 16, the Kinneys took him to see the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., pushing him in his new wheelchair and pausing so the boy could study the black granite wall. Minh wondered if his father was among the 58,000 names engraved on it.

"Minh stayed with us for 14 months and eventually ended up in San Jose, California," says Nancy, a physical therapist. "We had a lot of trouble raising him. He was very resistant to school and had no desire to get up in the morning. He wanted dinner at midnight because that's when he'd eaten on the streets in Vietnam." In time, Minh calmed down and settled into a normal routine. "I just grew up," he recalled. Minh, now 37 and a newspaper distributor, still talks regularly on the phone with the Kinneys. He calls them Mom and Dad.

Another 60 or 70 were camped there in the yard. The refrain Mrazek kept hearing was, "I want to go to the land of my father."

Mrazek, meanwhile, turned his attention to gaining passage of the Amerasian Homecoming Act, which he had authored and sponsored. In the end, he sidestepped normal Congressional procedures and slipped his three-page immigration bill into a 1,194-page appropriations bill, which Congress quickly approved and President Ronald Reagan signed in December 1987. The new law called for bringing Amerasians to the United States as immigrants, not refugees, and granted entry to almost anyone who had the slightest touch of a Western appearance. The Amerasians who had been so despised in Vietnam had a passport—their faces—to a new life, and because they could bring family members with them, they were showered with gifts, money and attention by Vietnamese seeking free passage to America. With the stroke of a pen, the children of dust had become the children of gold.

"IT WAS WILD," says Tyler Chau Pritchard, 40, who lives in Rochester, Minnesota, and was part of a 1991 Amerasian emigration from Vietnam. "Suddenly everyone in Vietnam loved us. It was like we were walking on clouds. We were their meal ticket, and people offered a lot of money to Amerasians willing to claim them as mothers and grandparents and siblings."

Counterfeit marriage licenses and birth certificates began appearing on the black market. Bribes for officials who would substitute photographs and otherwise alter documents for "families" applying to leave rippled through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Once the "families" reached the United States and checked into one of 55 transit centers, from Utica, New York, to Orange County, California, the new immigrants would often abandon their Amerasian benefactors and head off on their own.

It wasn't long before unofficial reports began to detail mental-health problems in the Amerasian community. "We were

Scrappy resilience seems to link Amerasians, many of whom have found success in America. Saran Bynum (above left) is Queen Latifah's office manager. School administrator Canh Oxelson (right) moonlights as a Tiger Woods impersonator.

hearing stories about suicides, deep-rooted depression, an inability to adjust to foster homes," says Fred Bemak, a professor at George Mason University who specializes in refugee mental-health issues and was enlisted by the National Institute for Mental Health to determine what had gone wrong. "We'd never seen anything like this with any refugee group."

Many Amerasians did well in their new land, particularly those who had been raised by their Vietnamese mothers, those who had learned English and those who ended up with loving foster or adoptive parents in the United States. But in a 1991-92 survey of 170 Vietnamese Amerasians nationwide, Bemak found that some 14 percent had attempted suicide; 76 percent wanted, at least occasionally, to return to Vietnam. Most were eager to find their fathers, but only 33 percent knew his name.

"Amerasians had 30 years of trauma, and you can't just turn that around in a short period of time or undo what happened to them in Vietnam," says Sandy Dang, a Vietnamese refugee who came to the United States in 1981 and has run an outreach program for Asian youths in Washington, D.C. "Basically they were unwanted children. In Vietnam, they weren't accepted as Vietnamese and in America they weren't considered Americans. They searched for love but usually didn't find it. Of all the immigrants in the United States, the Amerasians, I think, are the group that's had the hardest time finding the American Dream."

But Amerasians are also survivors, their character steeled by hard times, and not only have they toughed it out in Vietnam and the United States, they are slowly carving a cultural identity, based on the pride—not the humiliation—of being Amerasian. The dark shadows of the past are receding, even in Vietnam, where discrimination against Amerasians has faded. They're learning how to use the American political system to their advantage and have lobbied Congress for passage of a bill that would grant citizenship to all Amerasians in the United States. And under the auspices of groups like the Amerasian Fellowship Association, they are holding regional "galas" around the country—sit-down dinners with music and speeches and hosts in tuxedos—that attract 500 or 600 "brothers and sisters" and celebrate the Amerasian community as a unique immigrant population.

JIMMY MILLER, a quality inspector for Triumph Composite Systems Inc., a Spokane, Washington, company making parts for Boeing jets, considers himself one of the fortunate ones. His grandmother in Vung Tau took him in while his mother served a five-year sentence in a re-education camp for trying to flee Vietnam. He says his grandmother filled him with love and hired an "underground" teacher to tutor him in English. "If she hadn't done that, I'd be illiterate," Miller says. At age 22, in 1990, he came to the United States with a third-grade education and passed the GED to earn a high-school diploma. It was easy convincing the U.S. consular officer who interviewed him in Ho Chi Minh City that he was the son of an American. He had a picture of his father, Sgt. Maj. James A. Miller II, exchanging wedding vows with Jimmy's mother, Kim, who was pregnant with him at the time. He carries the picture in his wallet to this day.

Jimmy's father, James, retired from the U.S. Army in 1977 after a 35-year career. In 1994, he was sitting with his wife, Nancy,

on a backyard swing at their North Carolina home, mourning the loss of his son from a previous marriage, James III, who had died of AIDS a few months earlier, when the telephone rang. On the line was Jimmy's sister, Trinh, calling from Spokane, and in typically direct Vietnamese fashion, before even saying hello, she asked, "Are you my brother's father?" "Excuse me?" James replied. She repeated the question, saying she had tracked him down with the help of a letter bearing a Fayetteville postmark he had written Kim years earlier. She gave him Jimmy's telephone number.

James called his son ten minutes later, but mispronounced his Vietnamese name—Nhat Tung—and Jimmy, who had spent four years looking for his father, politely told the caller he had the wrong number and hung up. His father called back. "Your mother's name is Kim, right?" he said. "Your uncle is Marseille? Is your aunt Phuong Dung, the famous singer?" Jimmy said yes to each question. There was a pause as James caught his breath. "Jimmy," he said, "I have something to tell you. I am your dad."

"I can't tell you how tickled I was Jim owned up to his own child," says Nancy. "I have never seen a man happier in my life. He got off the phone and said, "'My son Jimmy is alive!'" Nancy could well understand the emotions swirling through her husband and new stepson; she had been born in Germany shortly after World War II, the daughter of a U.S. serviceman she never knew and a German mother.

Over the next two years, the Millers crossed the country several times to spend weeks with Jimmy, who, like many Amerasians, had taken his father's name. "These Amerasians are pretty amazing," Nancy said. "They've had to scrap for everything. But you know the only thing that boy ever asked for? It was for unconditional fatherly love. That's all he ever wanted." James Miller died in 1996, age 66, while dancing with Nancy at a Christmas party.

"They've had to scrap for everything. But you know the only thing that boy ever asked for? It was for unconditional fatherly love."

Once shunned by many, Vietnamese Amerasians now celebrate their heritage (above: a San Jose gala in 2008). At a similar gathering, many in the audience wept when an Amerasian family that had just arrived in the United States was introduced.

BEFORE FLYING TO SAN JOSE, California, for an Amerasian regional banquet, I called former Representative Bob Mrazek to ask how he viewed the Homecoming Act on its 20th anniversary. He said that there had been times when he had questioned the wisdom of his efforts. He mentioned the instances of fraud, the Amerasians who hadn't adjusted to their new lives, the fathers who had rejected their sons and daughters. "That stuff depressed the hell out of me, knowing that so often our good intentions had been frustrated," he said.

But wait, I said, that's old news. I told him about Jimmy Miller and about Saran Bynum, an Amerasian who is the office manager for actress-singer Queen Latifah and runs her own jewelry business. (Bynum, who lost her New Orleans home in Hurricane Katrina, says, "Life is beautiful. I consider myself blessed to be alive.") I told him about Tiger Woods look-alike Canh Oxelson, who has an undergraduate degree from the University of San Francisco, a master's degree from Harvard and is dean of students at one of Los Angeles' most prestigious preparatory schools, Harvard-Westlake in North Hollywood. And I told him about the Amerasians who got off welfare and are giving voice to the once-forgotten children of a distant war.

"You've made my day," Mrazek said.

THE CAVERNOUS CHINESE RESTAURANT in a San Jose mall where Amerasians gathered for their gala filled quickly. Tick-

ets were $40—and $60 if a guest wanted wine and a "VIP seat" near the stage. Plastic flowers adorned each table and there were golden dragons on the walls. Next to an American flag stood the flag of South Vietnam, a country that has not existed for 34 years. An honor guard of five former South Vietnamese servicemen marched smartly to the front of the room. Le Tho, a former lieutenant who had spent 11 years in a re-education camp, called them to attention as a scratchy recording sounded the national anthems of the United States and South Vietnam. Some in the audience wept when the guest of honor, Tran Ngoc Dung, was introduced. Dung, her husband and six children had arrived in the United States just two weeks earlier, having left Vietnam thanks to the Homecoming Act, which remains in force but receives few applications these days. The Trans were farmers and spoke no English. A rough road lay ahead, but, Dung said, "This is like a dream I've been living for 30 years." A woman approached the stage and pressed several $100 bills into her hand.

I asked some Amerasians if they were expecting Le Van Minh, who lived not far away in a two-bedroom house, to come to the gala. They had never heard of Minh. I called Minh, now a man of 37, with a wife from Vietnam and two children, 12 and 4. Among the relatives he brought to the United States is the mother who threw him out of the house 27 years ago.

Minh uses crutches and a wheelchair to get around his home and a specially equipped 1990 Toyota to crisscross the neighborhoods where he distributes newspapers. He usually rises shortly after midnight and doesn't finish his route until 8 a.m. He says he's too busy for any spare-time activities but hopes to learn how to barbecue one day. He doesn't think much about his past life as a beggar in the streets of Saigon. I asked him if he thought life had given him a fair shake.

"Fair? Oh, absolutely, yes. I'm not angry at anyone," said Minh, a survivor to the core.

THERE WAS LITTLE CHANCE OF MISSING THE ELEphant in the room. About a dozen years after Simba died at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, a half-inch slab of her yellowish, wrinkled, basketball-size brain was laid out before John Allman, a neuroscientist at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena.

Preserved in formaldehyde, it looked like half a pancake, frozen solid on a misting bed of dry ice. Allman carefully sliced it using the laboratory equivalent of a deli meat cutter. Taking well over an hour, he carved off 136 paper-thin sections.

Allman was searching for a peculiar kind of brain cell that he suspects is a key to how the African elephant—like a human being—manages to stay attuned to the ever-shifting nuances of social interplay. These spindle-shaped brain cells, called von Economo neurons—named for the man who first described them—are found only in human beings, great apes and a handful of other notably gregarious creatures. Allman, 66, compares the brains of people and other animals to gain insight into the evolution of human behavior.

"Neuroscience seems really reluctant to approach the question of what it is about our brains that makes us human, and John is doing exactly that," says Todd Preuss, a neuroanatomist and anthropologist at the Yerkes National Primate Re-

THE SOCIAL BRAIN

Does an obscure nerve cell explain what gorillas, elephants, whales—and people—have in common?

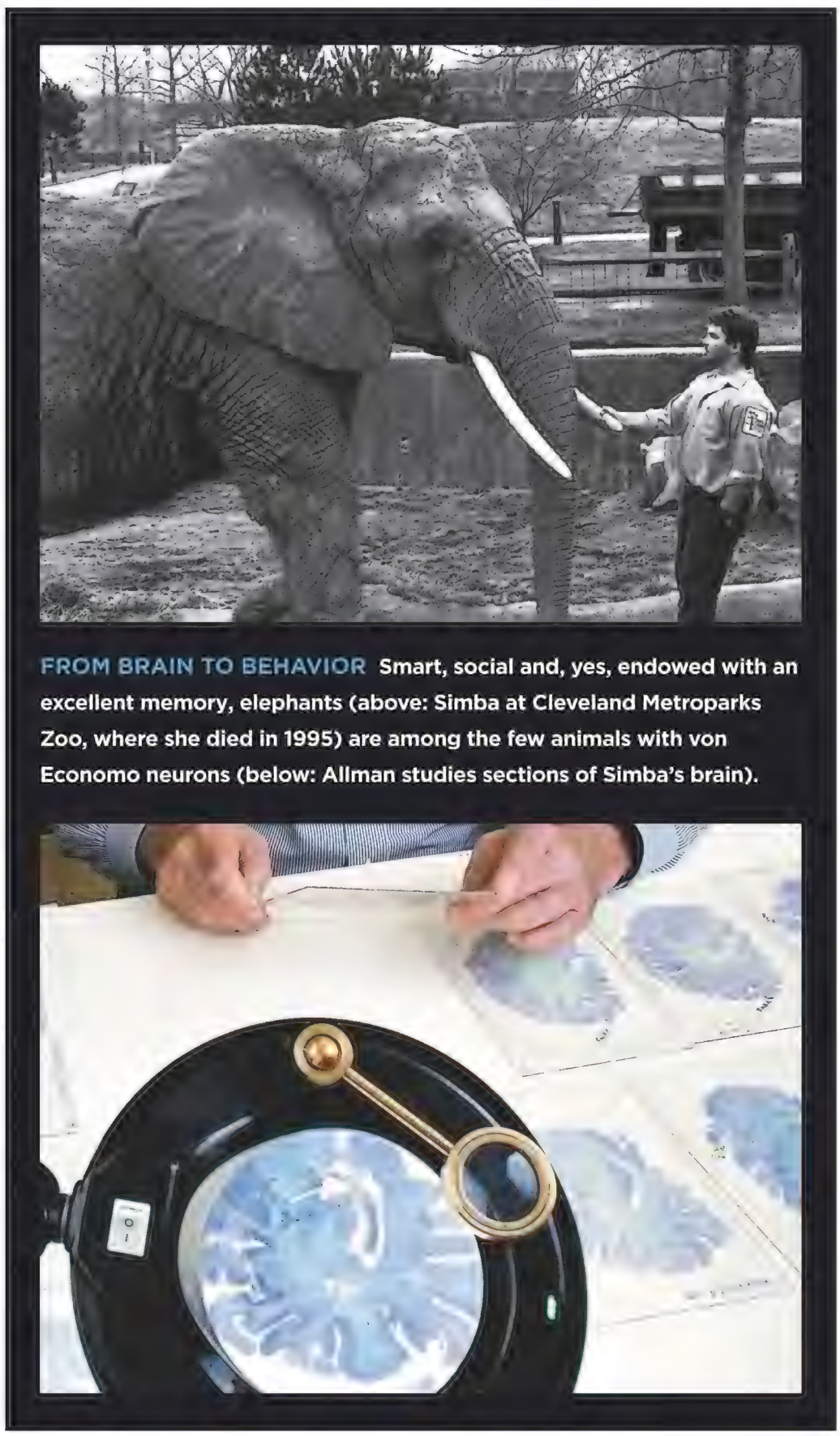
BY INGFEI CHEN PHOTOGRAPHS BY AARON HUEY

SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE
John Allman (with colleague Atiya Hakeem at Caltech examining elephant brain specimens) is searching for one of the biological keys to human behavior.

search Center in Atlanta. "We know very, very little about how our brains differ from other animals', except that our brains are bigger."

The von Economo neurons are the most striking finding of recent years in comparative brain research, in which scientists tease out fine differences among species. Neuroanatomist Patrick Hof and his colleagues at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in Manhattan first stumbled across the neurons in human brain specimens in 1995, in a region toward the front of the brain called the anterior cingulate cortex. Most neurons have cone- or star-shaped bodies with several branching projections, called dendrites, that receive signals from neighboring cells. But von Economo neurons are thin and elongated, with just one dendrite at each end. They are four times bigger than most other brain cells, and even in species that have the cells, they are rare.

The Manhattan team, it turned out, had rediscovered an obscure cell type first identified in 1881. Hof named the cells after a Vienna-based anatomist, Constantin von Economo, who precisely described the neurons in human brains in 1926; afterward the cells slipped into obscurity. Hof began looking in the brains of deceased primates, including macaque monkeys and great apes—chimps, bonobos, gorillas and orangutans—donated by zoos and sanctuaries. He contacted Allman, who had a collection of primate brains, and asked him to collaborate. In 1999, the scientists reported that all great ape species had von Economo cells, but lesser primates, such as macaques, lemurs and tarsiers, did not. That meant the neurons evolved in a common ancestor of all the great apes about 13 million years ago, after they diverged from other primates but well before the human and chimp lineages diverged about six million years ago.



FROM BRAIN TO BEHAVIOR **Smart, social and, yes, endowed with an excellent memory, elephants (above: Simba at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, where she died in 1995) are among the few animals with von Economo neurons (below: Allman studies sections of Simba's brain).**

Although Allman is renowned as a neuroanatomist, it's not surprising to find him delving into larger questions of what it means to be human. His doctorate, from the University of Chicago, was in anthropology, and he has long been fascinated with how the primate brain evolved. He conducted landmark studies with his colleague Jon Kaas, identifying the parts of the owl monkey brain that analyze visual information and make sight possible. In 1974, Allman moved to Caltech, where he studied vision for 25 years. But he also itched to uncover how the basic workings of the human brain shape social behavior. The von Economo neurons immediately captured his interest.

Allman, who is divorced, lives in a 150-year-old brick house in San Marino that he shares with two Australian shepherd dogs, Luna and Lunita. Sepia-toned photographs of his suffragist grandmother hang on the living room wall. Being "notoriously nocturnal," as Allman puts it, he rarely gets to the lab before 1 p.m., leaves in the evening to continue working at home and usually stays up until 2 a.m. His Caltech office is dimly lit by a single window and a small desk lamp; it looks like a cave overrun with books and papers. Down the hall, glass slides of gorilla, bonobo and elephant brain tissue, stained blue and brown, lie drying on tables and counters.

From von Economo's work, Allman learned that the unusual cells seemed to reside only in the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) and one other niche of the human brain, the frontal insula (FI). Brain-scanning studies have established that the ACC and FI

TOP: CLEVELAND METROPARKS ZOO

are particularly active when people experience emotion. Both areas also seem to be important for "self-monitoring," such as noticing bodily sensations of pain and hunger or recognizing that one has made a mistake. The ACC seems broadly involved in nearly every mental or physical effort.

By contrast, the frontal insula may play a more specific role in generating social emotions such as empathy, trust, guilt, embarrassment, love—even a sense of humor. According to experiments that measure the workings of various brain regions, the area becomes active when a mother hears a crying baby, for instance, or when someone scrutinizes a face to determine the other person's intentions. The FI is where the brain monitors and reacts to "gut feelings" from bodily sensations or interactions within a social network, Allman says. It's the link between self-monitoring and awareness of others that makes it possible for us to understand the feelings of other people. "The basic proposition that I'm advancing," he says, "is the notion that self-awareness and social awareness are part of the same functioning, and the von Economo cells are part of that."

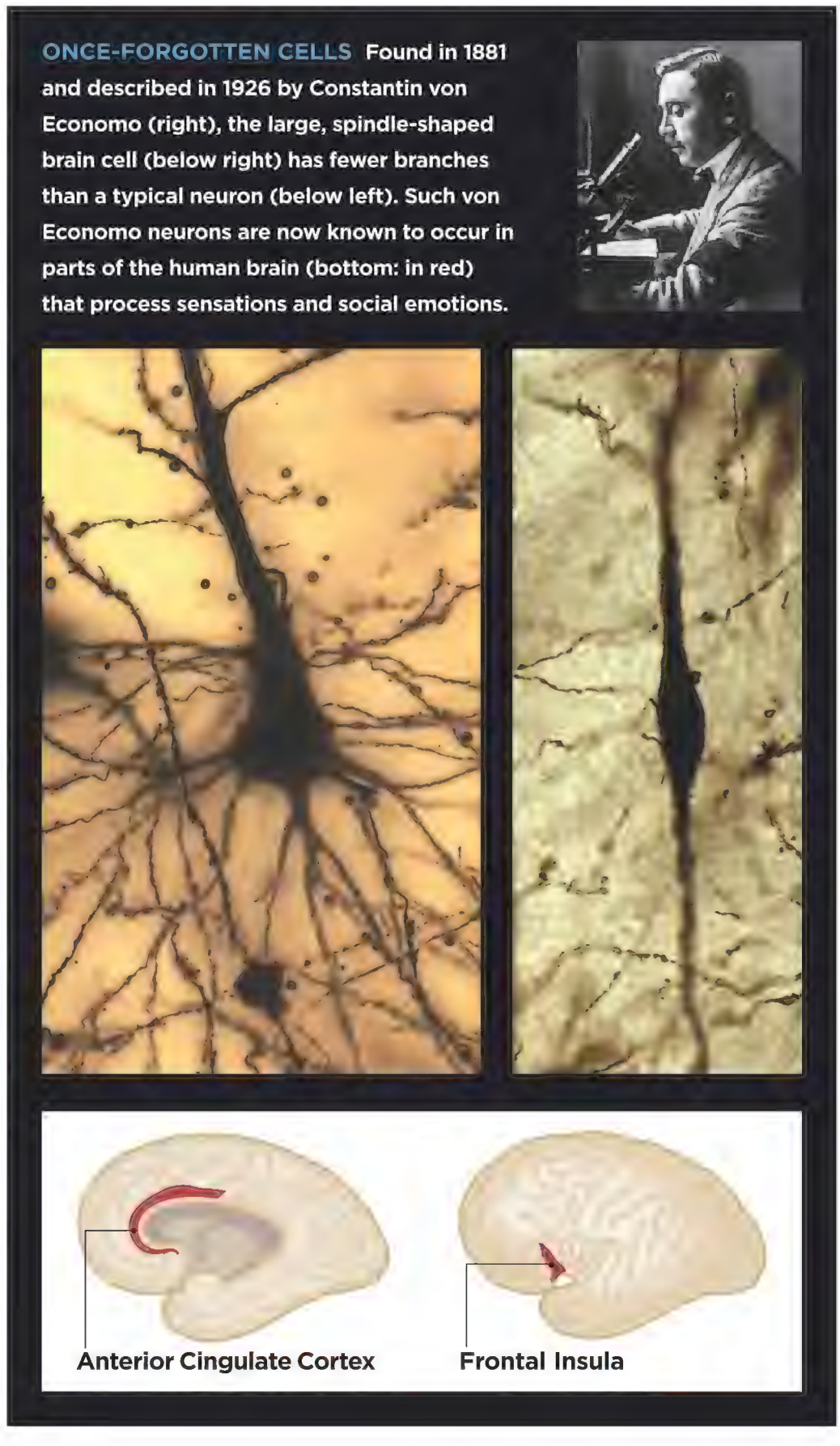
Allman thinks that the neurons expedite communication from the ACC and FI to the rest of the brain. The cells are unusually large, and in the nervous system, size often correlates with speed. "They're big neurons, which I think do a very fast read of something and then relay that information elsewhere quickly," he says. He speculates that as our primate ancestors evolved bigger and bigger brains, they needed high-speed connections to send messages across greater distances. "Large brain size necessarily carries with it a slowing down of communication within the brain," he adds. "So one way of dealing with that is to have a few specialized populations of cells that are pretty fast."

Given that the neurons live in the brain's social hot spots, Allman theorizes that the von Economo cell system allows a rapid, intuitive read on emotionally charged, volatile situations. The neurons "would enable one to quickly adjust to changing social contexts," he speculates. In the ancient past, this neural wiring might have conferred a survival edge to our ancestors by enabling them to make accurate, split-second judgments, especially about whom they could trust or not.

Allman, Hof and their colleagues have looked for von Economo neurons in more than 100 animal species, from sloths to platypuses. Only a few of them, other than primates and elephants, are known to have the cells: humpback whales, sperm whales, fin whales, orcas and bottle-nosed dolphins. The cells presumably evolved in now extinct species that gave rise to those marine mammals some 35 million years ago.

As I watched him section the elephant brain at Caltech, Allman, with colleagues Atiya Hakeem and Virginie Goubert, finally reached the FI of Simba's left hemisphere. Three days later, microscope examination of the brain slices revealed it to be dotted with the distinctive spindle-shaped cells. That confirmed their previous sighting of similar neurons in the FI of Simba's right hemisphere. The elephant cells are larger than human and primate ones, about the size of whale neurons, but the size and shape are unmistakably von Economo neurons.

From counting the von Economo cells in 16 slides—an eye-glazing chore—Hakeem and Allman estimate that there are roughly 10,000 of them in the postage-stamp-size FI on


ONCE-FORGOTTEN CELLS Found in 1881 and described in 1926 by Constantin von Economo (right), the large, spindle-shaped brain cell (below right) has fewer branches than a typical neuron (below left). Such von Economo neurons are now known to occur in parts of the human brain (bottom: in red) that process sensations and social emotions.
Anterior Cingulate Cortex
Frontal Insula

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS; K.K. WATSON, T.K. JONES & J.M. ALLMAN / WITH PERMISSION FROM ELSEVIER (2); ILLUSTRATION: GUILBERT GATES

the right side of the elephant brain, or about 0.8 percent of the FI's 1.3 million neurons. Von Economo neurons are more plentiful in the human FI, averaging about 193,000 cells and accounting for about 1.25 percent of all neurons there. In absolute numbers, the human brain has roughly half a million von Economo neurons, far more than the brains of elephants, whales or great apes. Allman and his colleagues have found none in the elephant's closest kin: the anteater, armadillo and rock hyrax. The cells' absence in these species supports Allman's theory that the neurons are a feature of big brains.

Allman speculates that such cells readily evolve from a small set of neurons in the insular cortex that are found in all mammals and regulate appetite. He thinks that while von Economo cells likely evolved to speed information around a big brain, they got co-opted by the demands of social interactions. If he's right, smart, social animals such as whales and elephants might have the same specialized wiring for empathy and social intelligence as human beings.

Whales and elephants, like people and great apes, have large brains and a prolonged juvenile stage during which they learn from their elders. They recognize one another and develop lifelong cooperative relationships. Killer whales hunt in groups and protect injured pod mates. Elephant society is anchored by matriarchs that guide their herds to watering holes they know from previous visits. (And there may be some truth to the belief that elephants never forget: when Allman, Hof and Hakeem made the first high-resolution 3-D image of an elephant brain, in 2005, they found an enormous hippocampus, the brain region where memories are formed.) The sensitive beasts identify each other by their rumblings and trumpet calls, come to each other's aid and seem to mourn their dead.

Allman likes to show a clip from a documentary about a group of African elephants that adopted an orphaned calf. When the baby elephant falls into a water hole, the matriarch quickly marches in, followed by the others. Together she and a second female use their tusks, trunks and legs to free the calf from the muck. Another animal paws at the steep bank with its foot, building a ramp the youngster uses to climb to safety. "It's really remarkable," says Allman of how the elephants rapidly sized up the crisis and worked together to save the baby. "It's a very high sort of functioning that very few animals are able to do. And," he adds with a chuckle, "humans can do it only on good days." The rescue, he says, "captures the essence of really complex, coordinated social behavior."

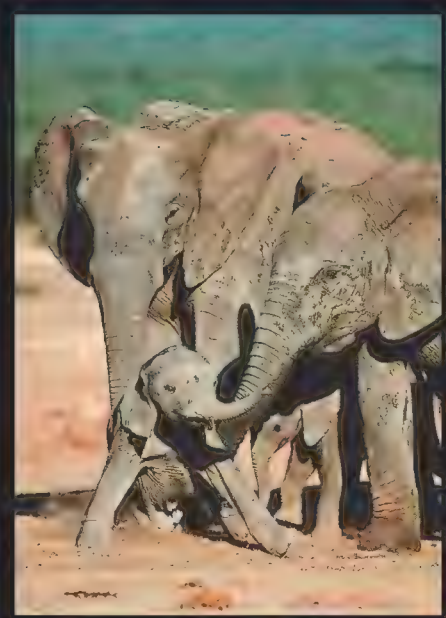
The idea of the neurons' centrality to social intelligence is gaining ground. Yerkes primatologist Frans de Waal says Allman's "extremely exciting" research dovetails with some of his own investigations of pachyderm intelligence. Two years ago, de Waal and two collaborators reported that a Bronx Zoo elephant named Happy could recognize herself in a mirror. Some scientists theorize that the ability to recognize one's own reflection indicates a capacity for self-awareness and even empathy, useful skills in a highly social species. De Waal points out that only animals that have von Economo neurons can do so.

Yet de Waal also cautions that "until someone establishes the exact function of those cells, it remains a story, basically."

Allman's thoughts about von Economo

ONE FOR ALL, ALL FOR ONE

Among the animals known to live in complex groups are African elephants (right: in South Africa), mountain gorillas (below: in Rwanda) and humpback whales (bottom: feeding near Alaska after circling a school of fish). Why are they so good at socializing? One reason, Allman contends, is specialized von Economo neurons that speed impulses across unusually large brains among centers involved in communication and cooperation.



RICHARD DU TOIT / MINDEN PICTURES; THOMAS MARENT / MINDEN PICTURES; HIROYA MINAKUCHI / MINDEN PICTURES

cells are still evolving. As new data comes in, he discards initial concepts and integrates others. Unlike the stereotypical cautious scientist, he doesn't hesitate to put forward bold hypotheses based on a few observations. The theory that von Economo neurons underlie social cognition is audacious. And it's tempting to seize upon the cells as a simple explanation for the basis of our species' complex social nature. But Allman knows that's a stretch.

His theory has its skeptics. Anthropologist Terrence Deacon, of the University of California at Berkeley, questions whether the neurons are truly a different type of brain cell or are simply a variation that arises in large brains. He says that the differences in our brains that make us human are more likely to have arisen from large-scale changes than from subtle changes in neuron shape. "I don't think it's a very big part of the story," he says of Allman's idea. Yet, he adds, when it comes to understanding the human brain, "so long as we recognize that we have so little to go on, under those circumstances all hypotheses should be entertained."

Point taken. But it's hard not to be seduced by Allman's theory when some of the most compelling evidence comes not from the animal pathology lab but from the medical clinic.

William Seeley, a neurologist at the University of California at San Francisco, studies a poorly understood neurodegenerative disease called frontotemporal dementia. Patients suffer a breakdown in their character, losing social graces and empathy, turning insensitive, erratic and irresponsible. Marriages and careers implode. Many patients seem to lack physical self-awareness: when diagnosed with other illnesses, they deny having any problems. Brain imaging studies of patients with the dementia have uncovered damage to frontal areas of the brain.

In 2004, Seeley heard Allman lecture about von Economo neurons. As Allman clicked through his PowerPoint slides, Seeley saw that the cells were clustered in the same brain regions that the dementia targeted, the ACC and FI. "It was kind of like, Eureka," Seeley recalls. He thought the cells might help researchers figure out why those areas were vulnerable to destruction. "Also, I thought, what an interesting way to learn something about human nature. Maybe the deficits that patients develop might be in things that are uniquely human. So there was a big rush of ideas."

Afterward, over coffee, Seeley and Allman agreed to team up to find out whether von Economo neurons were damaged in people with frontotemporal dementia. Analyzing brains from deceased patients, the scientists discovered that, in fact, about 70 percent of von Economo neurons in the ACC had been destroyed, whereas neighboring brain cells were largely unaffected. "It is very clear that the original target of the disease is these cells, and when you destroy these cells you get the whole breakdown of social functioning," says Allman. "That's a really astounding result that speaks to the function of the cells about as clearly as anything can."

This unusual neural system seems to underlie a lot of what makes us human. But the fact that elephants and whales apparently share the same neural hardware opens the mind to a tilt in perspective: our brains may be more similar to those of other smart, social animals than we thought.

MINDS THAT MATTER Patrick Hof (above right) researches when von Economo neurons evolved in the primate family tree. Studying other species yields insights into "what it is about our brains that makes us human," says Todd Preuss (above left: with a chimpanzee brain). People robbed of the cells by disease suffer from a "breakdown of social functioning," says Allman (below: with his Australian shepherds).

INGFEI CHEN *lives in Santa Cruz, California. Photographer* **AARON HUEY** *lives in Seattle.*

TOP LEFT: JACK KEARSE / EMORY UNIVERSITY; TOP RIGHT: MICHAEL BALTER

Road Warrior

French amateur archaeologist Bruno Tassan fights to preserve a neglected 2,000-year-old Roman highway in southern France

BY JOSHUA HAMMER

Photographs by Clay McLachlan

At first glance, it didn't appear that impressive: a worn limestone pillar, six feet high and two feet wide, standing slightly askew beside a country road near the village of Pélissanne in southern France. "A lot of people pass by without knowing what it is," Bruno Tassan, 61, was saying, as he tugged aside dense weeds that had grown over the column since he last inspected it. Tassan was showing me a *milliaire*, or milestone, one of hundreds planted along the highways of Gaul at the time of the Roman Empire. The inscription had worn away ages ago, but Tassan, a documentary filmmaker and amateur archaeologist, was well versed in the artifact's history. This particular stone, set in place in 3 B.C. during the reign of Augustus, was once a perfect cylinder, set along the nearly 50 miles between Aquae Sextiae (Aix-en-Provence) and Arelate (Arles). "It's one of the last standing," Tassan said.

In 12 B.C., Augustus, at the height of his power, commanded his legions to build a highway that would traverse the province of Gallia Narbonensis, or southern Gaul, the last of whose unruly tribes had only recently been subdued. Over the next ten years, surveyors, engineers and construction crews carried off one of antiquity's greatest feats: grading and paving a road from the mountains above the Mediterranean near modern Nice to the Rhone River, 180 miles distant. For nearly four centuries, the Via Aurelia served as the region's principal artery, over which armored legions, charioteers, couriers, traders, government officials and countless others passed. It was the Interstate 95 of its time, complete with rest stops and chariot service stations every 12 to 20 miles—a crucial part of a 62,000-mile road network that extended from the Iberian Peninsula to Asia Minor. Along this paved and finely graded route, Rome maintained its control over far-flung provinces, developed commerce, and disseminated its culture and architecture. But as the empire began its long decline—Rome would fall in the fifth century A.D.—the Via Aurelia began to disintegrate. In contrast, the Via Domitia, an even older Roman route, constructed around 122 B.C. in neighboring Languedoc-Rousillon, has been well preserved, thanks to the intervention of local governments and private interests.

Tassan and a handful of fellow enthusiasts have appointed themselves custodians of the Via Aurelia. During the past few years, he has matched pre-medieval maps to 21st-century aerial photographs, located broken bits of ancient macadam and tried to protect a handful

Bruno Tassan (above) wages a tireless campaign to locate and save vestiges of ancient Rome's Via Aurelia in France. (Its landmarks include the first-century B.C. Flavian's Bridge, opposite.) Tassan discovered Roman history in his teens: "From that point," he says, "I was hooked."

ALL PHOTOS BY CLAY MCLACHLAN / AURORA SELECT

of 2,000-year-old stone walls, sarcophagi, aqueducts, bridges and road markers that point to the engineering sophistication, as well as the reach, of ancient Rome. He has created a Web site devoted to the Via Aurelia (via-aurelia.net/), conducted tours for growing numbers of Gaulophiles and hopes to make a documentary about the road.

Tassan has also sought to solve some of the lingering questions about the highway, including how the Romans managed to transport milestones, weighing an average of 4,400 pounds, from rock quarries to road-building sites, often a dozen or so miles away. The Roman legal code in place at the time forbade chariots from carrying loads heavier than 1,082 pounds, the maximum that the vehicles' wooden axles could safely support. "Did they carry them on foot? Did they get a special exemption?" Tassan wondered aloud, as he scrutinized the worn Pélissanne pillar. "It remains," he says, "a mystery."

Experts on the era acknowledge that Tassan has made a unique contribution to ancient Gaulian scholarship. "Everyone knows about the Roman amphitheaters of Arles and Nîmes," says Michel Martin, curator in chief of the library at the Museum of Arles and Ancient Provence. "But the Via Aurelia is a largely lost piece of Roman history. Bruno has done much to keep it alive and to protect the little that's left."

A SERIES OF MILITARY TRIUMPHS paved the way for construction of one of the greatest roads through the empire. During the second century B.C., the region that is now France was a no man's land of warring tribes—a vast stretch of untamed territory lying between Rome and its colony of Hispania (present-day Spain and Portugal). In 125 B.C., citizens of the Greek colony of Massalia (Massillia in Latin), now Marseille, a port since 600 B.C., came under attack from the powerful Salyen tribe, a Celtic confederation whose holdings extended from the upper Rhone to the Alps. Marseille appealed to its nearest power, Rome, for help; in 123 B.C., Roman consul Caius Sextius Calvinus led a force of legionnaires to face the Celts, who were legendary for their ferocity. ("They cut off the heads of enemies slain in battle and attach them to the necks of their horses," the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus wrote of them in the first century B.C.) The Roman legion thrashed the tribe at the Celtic garrison of Entremont, a fortification set on a 1,200-foot-high plateau. The victorious Sextius Calvinus then founded the settlement of Aquae Sextiae on the site of nearby thermal baths, giving the Romans a firm foothold in southern Gaul.

Nearly 20 years later, a Teutonic horde stormed across the Rhine River intent upon seizing Aquae Sextiae. A small force of Roman soldiers lured the invaders toward the town; 3,000 troops then attacked the Teutons from behind, killing 90,000 and capturing 20,000. "By the conditions of the surrender [of the Teutons] three hundred of their married women were to be handed over to the Romans," the Christian scholar Jerome wrote in the fifth century A.D. "When the Teuton matrons heard of this stipulation, they first begged the [Roman] consul that they might be set apart to minister in the temples of Ceres and Venus; and then when they failed to obtain their request and were removed by the [guards], they slew their little children and next morning were all found dead in each other's arms, having strangled themselves in the night."

After the slaughter of the Teutons, Rome consolidated its control over the region. In 62 B.C., the last southern tribe to rise against the empire was subjugated. Julius Caesar established a naval base at Fréjus and founded Arles as a settlement for retired veterans of his Sixth Legion, whom he had led to a series of bloody victories in Asia Minor. When Caesar

"Everyone knows about the Roman amphitheaters of Arles and Nîmes," says Michel Martin. "But the Via Aurelia is a largely *lost piece of Roman history.*"

Writer **JOSHUA HAMMER** *is based in Berlin.*
Photographer **CLAY MCLACHLAN** *works from Paris.*

Tassan (above: uncovering a milepost near Pélissanne) champions ancient Gaul's principal artery (below: in red) in a region in southern France rich in Roman history (left: aqueducts near Fontvieille; bottom: a carving at the Museum of Arles and Ancient Provence). "The highway," says a curator at the museum, "was a means for Rome to assert its power."

was assassinated in 44 B.C., his adopted son Octavian, later renamed Augustus, rose to power and made the development of Gallia Narbonensis, his province in southern Gaul, a priority.

ONE AFTERNOON I DROVE THROUGH a series of long tunnels north of Nice to La Turbie, a medieval village hugging the hills 1,600 feet above the Mediterranean. Here, where the Alps jut sharply down to the sea, the Romans built a section of their new highway in 12 B.C. Surveyors, engineers and construction crews improved and linked paths that had existed since the time of the Greeks, cleaving passes through the mountains, introducing a sophisticated drainage system, erecting milestones and standardizing the road width to 15 feet—wide enough for two chariots to pass. It wound along the rugged coast to Fréjus, then cut across fertile plains to the Rhone. There, the thoroughfare merged with the Via Domitia, running west through the Spanish Pyrenees. When the two roads met—a convergence comparable to the 1869 linking of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads at Promontory Summit, Utah—Roman control over the Mediterranean basin was cemented.

The Romans commemorated the feat with a victory monument at La Turbie, placing, in 7 B.C., a statue of Augustus on a limestone cylinder surrounded by 24 Doric columns. This is what I had come to see: I hiked along a wooded footpath to a hilltop clearing, from which the 115-foot-high Tropaeum, or Trophy, of Augustus—still partially standing after two millennia—dominates the landscape. The emperor's statue has disappeared, and only four of the marble columns that encircled the monument remain intact. One side of the great marble base features reliefs of winged deities flanking a Latin inscription that hails Augustus and the pacification of Gaul. Sheltering myself from a fierce wind, I gazed down the rocky coast of Italy; directly below, the hotels and villas of Monaco glittered at the edge of the turquoise sea.

When the two roads converged—comparable to linking the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads—*Roman control over the Mediterranean* basin was cemented.

It seemed a fitting place to proclaim Rome's glory.

The Via Julia Augusta, as the highway was initially called, greatly improved overland travel in the empire. Roman legions could shuttle long distances along it at an average speed of almost four miles per hour. Messengers could travel between Arles and Rome, a distance of about 550 miles, in a mere eight days. "The highway was a means for Rome to assert its power," curator Martin told me. "Its real purpose was to move troops and public couriers at the fastest rate possible." By the third century A.D., the highway was known as the Via Aurelia and regarded as an extension of the empire's road from Rome to Pisa, commissioned in 241 B.C. by the censor Caius Aurelius Cotta.

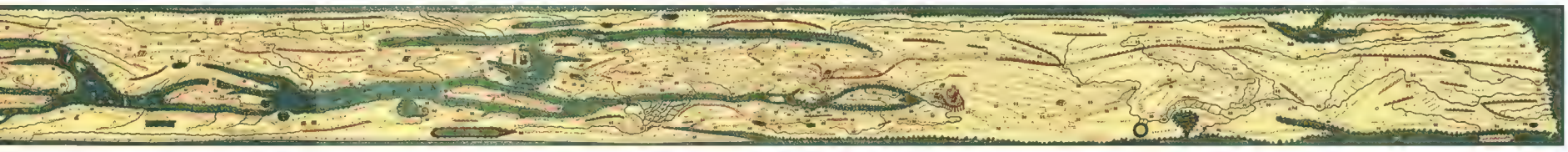
But beginning around A.D. 235, the Via Aurelia fell on hard times. After centuries of political stability, a series of military coups roiled the empire. Roman divisions began turning on one another, the value of currency plummeted, urban renewal ceased and towns and entire districts were abandoned. The empire revived briefly under Diocletian (A.D. 284-305) and Constantine (A.D. 306-37). But in 406, the Rhine froze over and barbarians spilled into Gaul. By

BOTTOM: AUSTRIAN NATIONAL LIBRARY; P. 47 MAP: GUILBERT GATES

the 470s, Arles had surrendered to the Visigoths, opening the whole of Provence to barbarian control. Over the next millennium, roads, bridges, aqueducts and other public works commissioned by Augustus and his successors disintegrated, and the precise route of the Via Aurelia was lost.

It remained largely forgotten until 1508, when Konrad Peutinger, a book collector from Augsburg, in Bavaria, acquired a 22-foot-long medieval scroll portraying a map of the world, from the Atlantic to the mouth of the Ganges, as it existed during the Roman Empire. The map's origins were obscure: a 13th-century monk from Colmar had apparently copied it from a Roman source, possibly a fourth-century A.D. map, or an even older one drawn by Agrippa, aide-de-camp to Augustus, at the dawn of Roman dominance. Whatever its origins, the Table of Peutinger, as it became known—with detailed topography, a rendering of the entire Roman road network, and 550 illustrations of rest stops, Roman amphitheaters and other features along the routes—was widely published. It has offered archaeologists an incomparable opportunity to track down lost vestiges of the Roman world. During the 1960s, in the Italian town of Torre Annunziata,

In 7 B.C., at a point along the Via Aurelia, in what is today the French village of La Turbie, the Romans erected a monument (above) to the emperor Augustus. Across Provence, many traces of ancient Rome, including the Via Aurelia (below: in a medieval map), have fallen victim, says curator Michel Martin, to "more roads being built, more auto routes."



near Pompeii, researchers used the Table of Peutinger to locate and excavate a sumptuous villa from the first century B.C.

I FIRST MET BRUNO TASSAN on a sunny afternoon in June at an outdoor café in Salon-de-Provence, a medieval town 24 miles west of Aix. Burly and suntanned, with a shock of white hair, Tassan grew up in a village near Grenoble. He spent 25 years working as a graphic designer before retiring last summer to pursue a lifelong fascination with ancient Gaul. "When I was 17, my mother gave me a copy of *The Civilization of Rome* [by French historian Pierre Grimal], and from that point I was hooked," he said. In 1998 he began working on a documentary about another historic route, the ancient Christian pilgrimage trail to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, where the remains of St. James, one of Jesus' Apostles, are said to be buried. To research the project, he set off on a 900-mile journey by foot across southern France and the Pyrenees, following the Roman road network. "I traversed three regions, and in two of them, the Roman road was in good shape," he told me. "The Via Domitia, which crosses two French *départements*, and the Via Acquitana, which joins Bordeaux and Astorga in Spain, were both well marked and preserved." This was not the case, however, he would learn, for the Via Aurelia.

What was going on, says curator Martin, was a process of urbanization and development around the Côte d'Azur that largely bypassed Languedoc-Rousillon, site of the Via Domitia. "Here you've got more roads being built, more auto routes, and, of course, more destruction," Martin says. "The vestiges of ancient Gaul just aren't as valued as they should be." As development accelerated, more and more of the road was fragmented into sections, stretches of it paved over or subsumed by housing tracts and factories. Rediscovering the surviving traces of the Roman route has been a matter of deduction, legwork and tapping into the historical memory.

"All these vestiges are in danger of disappearing. . . . Why can't it be like the Via Domitia? The milestones were saved, plaques were put up. Here, *I'm afraid it's all going.*"

After finishing our espressos, Tassan and I set out by car to inspect remains of the Via Aurelia that he had identified around the town of Salon-de-Provence. We crossed beneath an expressway, traversed an irrigation canal, bounced through fields of grapes, then turned down a narrow dirt road—actually a piece of antiquity—that cut a straight line between an olive orchard and a row of fenced-off villas.

Tassan peered through a barrier of cypress trees into a private garden, pointing out 20-foot-high ruins of a stone wall—what was left of a 2,000-year-old rest house where Via Aurelia travelers could water their horses, repair their chariots and lodge for the night. "Some rest houses had prostitutes as well," Tassan said. "Everything you could want for your journey." (The Table of Peutinger, which functioned as a kind of Michelin Guide of its time, graded guesthouses according to three classifications, basic, moderate and luxury, using a different illustration for each; the cushiest was represented by a rectangular villa with a pool in the middle.) Two guard dogs barked furiously at us, hurling themselves against a fence. Tassan admired the inn's ruins for another few seconds, then said, "*Bien*, let's get out of here."

We continued toward the village of Saint-Chamas, turning off the main road from time to time to pick up short stretches of the Via Aurelia—dirt paths, a row of ancient and cracked paving stones, narrow asphalted strips through vineyards. Approaching Saint-Chamas, we came across the ancient road's second-best-preserved vestige—after the Trophy of Augustus: Flavian's Bridge (see p. 45), marked by elegant arches at either end, spanning the Touloubre River. "This is a real treasure," Tassan said. Each arch, built from blocks of tawny limestone, rose about 20 feet high; atop a delicately carved pilaster stood sculptures of two crouching lions. (In 1944, a speeding U.S. Army truck accidentally rammed into one of the arches and knocked it down; American construction teams reassembled it and built a new bridge a few yards downriver.) Tassan pulled out a tape measure, knelt and measured the distance between grooves on the bridge's stone surface. "One point forty-two meters [4.5 feet]," he announced with satisfaction—the standard width of a Roman chariot axle.

to a mill, where wheat was ground into flour, then transported along the Via Aurelia to feed the growing population of Gaul. The height of the arches was delicately calibrated to maintain an even flow and pressure—another example of Roman engineering skill.

"You can see that the two aqueducts were built side by side," Tassan pointed out. "One fed the water mill just below, the other provided water to Arles. Now we're going to see something unusual." We followed the second aqueduct as it veered sharply to the right, away from the promontory, through an olive grove. Then, abruptly, it disappeared.

"What happened here?" I asked him.

He shrugged. "It could have been destroyed by the barbarians, to cut off the water supply to Arles," he replied. "But that's just a hypothesis. Nobody knows."

Tassan stood pensively beside the last stone arch for a time. Then, he pulled out his tape measure, got back down on his hands and knees, and began examining one more set of chariot-wheel grooves on the ancient road.

In Fréjus, one of ancient Rome's important Mediterranean ports, a first-century A.D. arena (left) is used today for concerts. The Via Aurelia, however, exists only in fragments (below: a segment between Fréjus and Cannes). The efforts of Bruno Tassan, says curator Martin, have "done much to keep [the road] alive, and to protect the little that's left."

THE NEXT DAY, I found Tassan in a blue mood. We had spent the morning touring a construction site near Marseille, where workers, oblivious to the damage they were inflicting, had been laying an oil pipeline across the Via Aurelia's original stones. Now we stood on a hilltop near the medieval village of Mouriès, not far from Arles, looking for traces of the ancient road. Though he was certain it had descended from this crest, he couldn't find a hint of it, not even after a dozen scouting expeditions. "I met an 80-year-old man who told me that when he was small, there was a road that ran through the olive fields here, and he said, 'that was the Via Aurelia.' But it doesn't exist anymore." It was an all too familiar story. "All these vestiges are in danger of disappearing," Tassan said as we drove down the slope. "Of course, modernization is obligatory, but there should be some effort made to preserve what's left. Why can't it be like the Via Domitia? The milestones were saved, plaques were put up. Here, I'm afraid it's all going."

Still, there are the pleasures of discovery and mysteries at every turn. After a few minutes, we stopped outside the rural village of Fontvieille, a few miles northeast of Arles. A double row of great stone arches—the remains of two aqueducts that once ran beside the Via Aurelia—marched in parallel lines through the arid brush. We followed them to the edge of a promontory; below us, golden fields of wheat extended in all directions; the scene looked as it must have at the height of the Roman Empire. Two thousand years ago, water ran down this hill via the aqueduct

The Guggenheim Museum, turning 50 this year, showcases the trailblazer's lifelong mission to elevate American society through architecture

BY ARTHUR LUBOW

THE TRIUMPH OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S most iconic building was also one of his last. The reinforced-concrete spiral known as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum opened in New York City 50 years ago, on October 21, 1959; six months before, Wright died at the age of 92. He had devoted 16 years to the project, facing down opposition from a budget-conscious client, building-code sticklers and, most significantly, artists who doubted that paintings could be displayed properly on a slanting spiral ramp. "No, it is not to subjugate the paintings to the building that I conceived this plan," Wright wrote to Harry Guggenheim, a Thoroughbred horse breeder and founder of *Newsday* who, as the benefactor's nephew, took over the project after Solomon's death. "On the contrary, it was to make the building and the painting a beautiful symphony such as never existed in the world of Art before."

The grandiloquent tone and unwavering self-assurance are as much Wright trademarks as the building's unbroken and open space. Time has indeed shown the Guggenheim's tilted walls and continuous ramp to be an awkward place to hang paintings, yet the years have also confirmed that in designing a building that bestowed brand-name recognition on a museum, Wright was prophetic. Four decades later, Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao—the curvaceous, titanium-clad affiliated museum in northern Spain—would launch a wave of cutting-edge architectural schemes for art institutions across the globe. But Wright was there first. A retrospective exhibition at the original Guggenheim (until August 23) reveals how often Wright pioneered trends that other architects would later embrace. Passive solar heating, open-plan offices, multi-storied hotel atriums—all are now common, but at the time Wright designed them they were revolutionary.

WILLIAM SHORT / GUGGENHEIM FOUNDATION, NY

With typical bravado, Frank Lloyd Wright (New York City, 1959) saw his Guggenheim Museum as "a beautiful symphony such as never existed in the world of Art before."

When Solomon Guggenheim, the heir to a mining fortune, and his art adviser, Hilla Rebay, decided to construct a museum for abstract painting (which they called "nonobjective art"), Wright was a natural choice as architect. In Rebay's words, the two were seeking "a temple of spirit, a monument" and Wright, through his long career, was a builder of temples and monuments. These included actual places of worship, such as Unity Temple (1905-8) for a Unitarian congregation in Oak Park, Illinois, one of the early masterpieces that proclaimed Wright's genius, and Beth Sholom Synagogue (1953-59) in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, which, like the Guggenheim, he supervised at the end of his life. But in everything he undertook, the goal of enhancing and elevating the human experience was always on Wright's mind. In his religious buildings, he used many of the same devices—bold geometric forms, uninterrupted public spaces and oblique-angled seating—as in his secular ones. The large communal room with overhead lighting that is the centerpiece of Unity Temple was an idea he had introduced in the Larkin Company Administration Building (1902-6), a mail-order house in Buffalo, New York. And before it reappeared in Beth Sholom, what he called "reflex-angle seating"—in which the audience fanned out at 30-degree angles around a projecting stage—was an organizing principle in his theater plans, starting in the early 1930s. To Wright's way of thinking, any building, if properly designed, could be a temple.

In his unshakable optimism, messianic zeal and pragmatic resilience, Wright was quintessentially American. A central theme that pervades his architecture is a recurrent question in American culture: How do you balance the need for individual privacy with the attraction of community activity? Everyone craves periods of solitude, but in Wright's view, a human being develops fully only as a social creature. In that context, angled seating allowed audience members to concentrate on the stage and simultaneously function as part of the larger group. Similarly, a Wright house contained, along with private bedrooms and baths, an emphasis on unbroken communal spaces—a living room that flowed into a kitchen, for example—unknown in domestic residences when he began his practice in the Victorian era. As early as 1903, given the opportunity to lay out a neighborhood (in Oak Park, which was never built), Wright proposed a "quadruple block plan" that placed an identical brick house on each corner of a block; he shielded the inhabitants from the public street with a low wall and oriented them inward toward connected gardens that encouraged exchanges with their neighbors. Good architecture, Wright wrote in a 1908 essay, should promote the democratic ideal of "the highest possible expression of the individual as a unit not inconsistent with a harmonious whole."

That vision animates the Guggenheim Museum. In the course of descending the building's spiral ramp, a visitor can focus on works of art without losing awareness of other museumgoers above and below. To that bifocal consciousness, the Guggenheim adds a novel element: a sense of passing time. "The strange thing about the ramp—I always feel I am in a space-time continuum, because I see where I've been and where I'm going," says Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, director of the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives in Scottsdale, Arizona. As Wright approached the end of his life, that perception of continuity—recalling where he had been while advancing into the future—must have appealed to him. And, looking back, he would have seen telling examples in his personal history of the tension between the individual and the community, between private desires and social expectations.

"I hated the sound of the word *papa*," Wright (below left: 1885) admitted. At 21, he married Catherine Lee Tobin (below right) and fathered six children. His dissatisfaction with domestic life led to an affair with his Oak Park neighbor Mamah Cheney.

WRIGHT'S FATHER, WILLIAM, WAS a restless, chronically dissatisfied Protestant minister and organist who moved the family, which included Wright's two younger sisters, from town to town until he obtained a divorce in 1885 and took off for good. Wright, who was 17 at the time, never saw his father again. His mother's family, the combative Lloyd Joneses, were Welsh immigrants who became prominent citizens of an agricultural valley near the village of Hillside, Wisconsin. Wright himself might have written the family motto: "Truth Against the World." Encouraged by his maternal relatives, Wright showed an early aptitude for architecture; he made his initial forays into building design by working on a chapel, a school and two houses in Hillside, before apprenticing in Chicago with the celebrated architect Louis H. Sullivan. Sullivan's specialty was office buildings, including

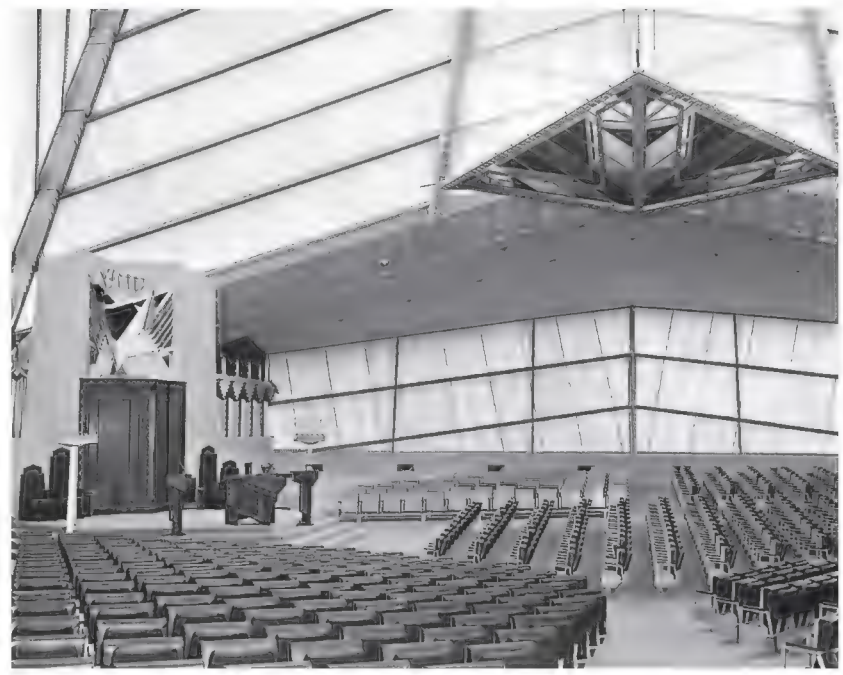
WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY; MRS. ROBERT L. WRIGHT COLLECTION

Wright's revolutionary "Prairie Style" houses (above: Robie House, 1908-10) avoided unnecessary ornamentation. His "reflex-angle seating" (below: Beth Sholom, 1953-59) allowed audiences unobstructed views as well as awareness of the whole.

classic skyscrapers, such as the Carson Pirie Scott & Company building, which were transforming the Chicago skyline.

But Wright devoted himself primarily to private residences, developing what he called "Prairie Style" houses, mostly in Oak Park, the Chicago suburb in which he established his own home. Low-slung, earth-hugging buildings with strong horizontal lines and open circulation through the public rooms, they were stripped clean of unnecessary decoration and used machine-made components. The Prairie Style revolutionized home design by responding to the domestic needs and tastes of modern families. Wright had first-hand knowledge of their requirements: in 1889, at 21, he had married Catherine Lee Tobin, 18, the daughter of a Chicago businessman, and, in short order, fathered six children.

Like his own father, however, Wright exhibited a deep ambivalence toward family life. "I hated the sound of the word *papa,*" he wrote in his 1932 autobiography. Dissatisfaction with domesticity predisposed him toward a similarly discontented Oak Park neighbor: Mamah Cheney, a client's



wife, whose career as head librarian in Port Huron, Michigan, had been thwarted by marriage and who found the duties of wife and mother a poor substitute. The Wrights and Cheneys socialized as a foursome, until, as Wright later described it, "the thing happened that has happened to men and women since time began—the inevitable." In June 1909,

ARTHUR LUBOW *wrote about the 17th-century Italian sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini in the October 2008 issue.*

KENNETH C. ZIRKEL / ISTOCK; WAYNE ANDREWS / ESTO

Mamah Cheney told her husband that she was leaving him; she joined Wright in Germany, where he was preparing a book on his work. The scandal titillated newspapers—the *Chicago Tribune* quoted Catherine as saying she had been the victim of a "vampire" seductress. Wright was painfully conflicted about walking out on his wife and children. He attempted a reconciliation with Catherine in 1910, but then resolved to live with Cheney, whose own work—a translation of the writings of Swedish feminist Ellen Key—provided intellectual support for this convention-defying step. Leaving the Oak Park gossipmongers behind, the couple retreated to the Wisconsin valley of the Lloyd Joneses to start anew.

Just below the crest of a hill in Spring Green, Wright designed a secluded house he called "Taliesin," or "shining brow," after a Welsh bard of that name. A rambling dwelling made of local limestone, Taliesin was the culmination of the Prairie Style, a big house with long roofs extending over the walls. By all accounts, Wright and Cheney lived there happily for three years, slowly winning over neighbors who had been prejudiced by the publicity that preceded them—until Taliesin became the setting for the greatest tragedy of the architect's long and eventful life. On August 15, 1914, while Wright was in Chicago on business, a deranged young cook locked the dining room and set it ablaze, standing with a hatchet at the only exit to bar all inside from leaving. Cheney and her two visiting children were among the seven who died. On the anguished journey to Wisconsin, a devastated Wright and his son John shared a train car with Cheney's former husband. Wright immediately vowed to rebuild the house, which was mostly in ruins. But he never fully recovered emotionally. "Something in him died with her, something loveable and gentle," his son later wrote in a memoir. (In April 1925, as the result of defective wiring, the second Taliesin also suffered a calamitous fire; it would be replaced by a third.)

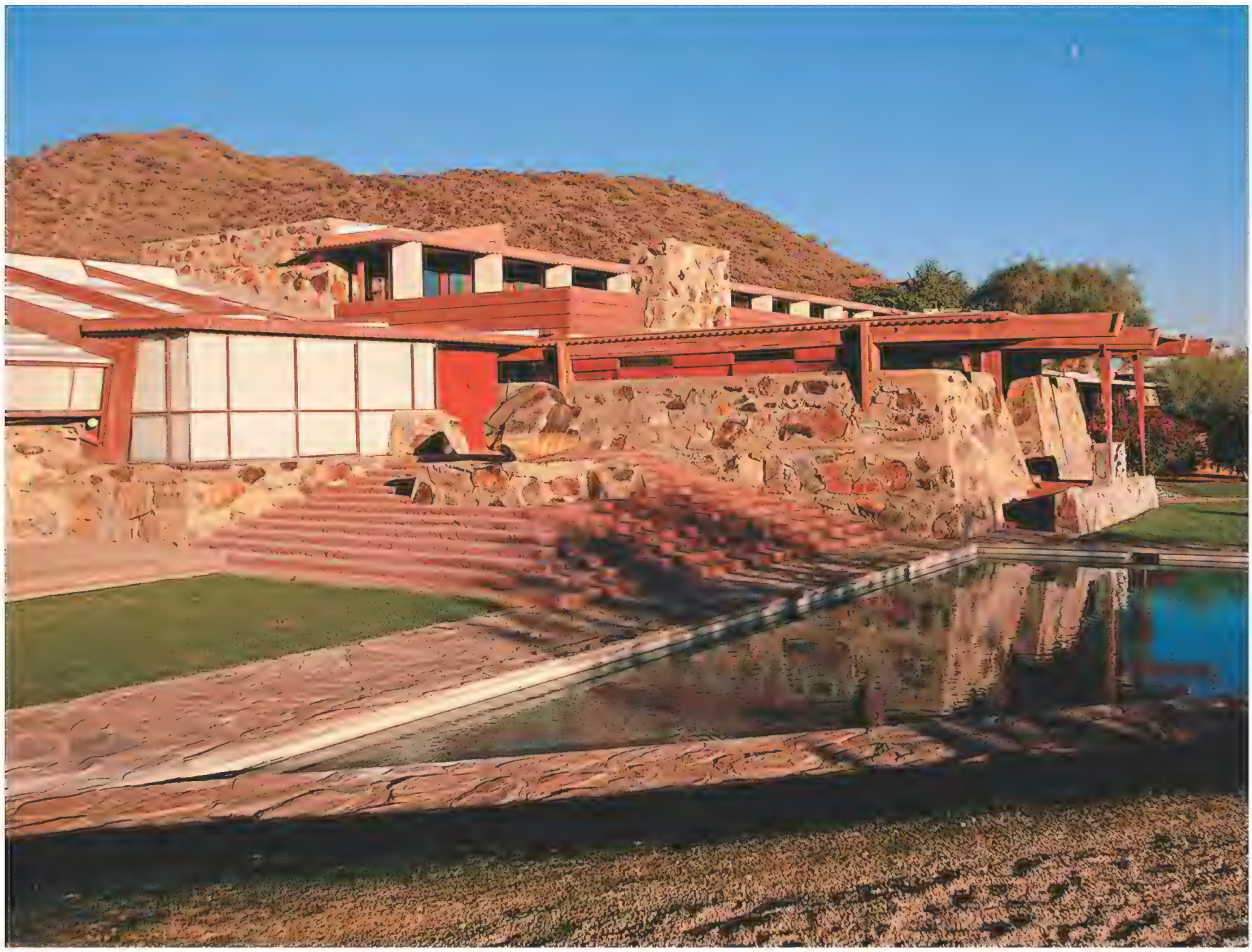
FOUR SLAIN AT "LOVE COTTAGE"

Horror Ends "Soulmate" Romance of Wright and Mrs Cheney.

Wright's domestic life took another turn when a condolence letter from a wealthy divorcée, the determinedly artistic Miriam Noel, led to a meeting and—less than six months after Cheney's death—to an invitation for Noel to come live with Wright at Taliesin. With her financial help, he reconstructed the damaged house. But Taliesin II did not become the sanctuary he sought. Wright was a theatrical personality, with a penchant for flowing hair, Norfolk jackets and low-hanging neckties. Yet even by his standards, the needy Noel was flamboyantly attention-seeking. Jealous of his devotion to Cheney's memory, she staged noisy al-

Wright's secluded Wisconsin home (below: 1911), which he called "Taliesin," would be the scene of the greatest tragedy of his life. On August 15, 1914, a deranged cook set the house on fire and barred the exit, killing Cheney (above) and her two children.

BOSTON GLOBE; CHICAGO TRIBUNE / WHS / ROBERTSTOCK / IPN; WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Wright's second marriage, to the flamboyant Miriam Noel (below left), lasted only five turbulent months. Much of his life with his third wife, Montenegrin Olgivanna Hinzenberg (below right), was spent in a house (above) in Arizona he dubbed Taliesin West.

tercations, leading to an angry separation only nine months after they met. Although the split appeared to be final, in November 1922, Wright obtained a divorce from Catherine and married Noel a year later. But wedlock only exacerbated their problems. Five months after the wedding, Noel left him, opening an exchange of ugly accusations and countercharges in a divorce proceeding that would drag on for years.

During this tempestuous period, Wright had worked on just a few major projects: the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, the Midway Gardens pleasure park in Chicago, and Taliesin. All three were expansions and refinements of work he had done previously rather than new directions. From 1915 to 1925, Wright executed only 29 commissions, a drastic drop-off from the output of his youth when, between 1901 and 1909, he built 90 of 135 commissions. In 1932, in their influential Museum of Modern Art exhibition on the "International Style" in architecture, Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock listed Wright among the "older generation" of architects. Indeed, by this time Wright had been a force in American architecture for more than three decades and was devoting most of his

KAREN HUNTT / CORBIS; PHIL FEDDERSON; GARY SCHULZ / WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

time to giving lectures and publishing essays; it was easy to believe that his best years were behind him. But in fact, many of his most heralded works were still to come.

ON NOVEMBER 30, 1924, ATTENDING A BALLET in Chicago, Wright had noticed a young woman seated next to him. "I secretly observed her aristocratic bearing, no hat, her dark hair parted in the middle and smoothed over her ears, a light small shawl over her shoulders, little or no make-up, very simply dressed," he wrote in his autobiography. Wright "instantly liked her looks." For her part, 26-year-old Olgivanna Lazovich Hinzenberg, a Montenegrin educated in Russia, had come to Chicago to try to salvage her marriage to a Russian architect, with whom she had had a daughter, Svetlana. Even before taking her seat, she would recall in an unpublished memoir, she had noticed "a strikingly handsome, noble head with a crown of wavy grey hair." Upon discovering that the ticket she had purchased at the last minute seated her next to this poetic-looking man, her "heart beat fast." During the performance, he turned to her and said, "Don't you think that these dancers and the dances are dead?" She nodded in agreement. "And he smiled, looking at me with unconcealed admiration," she recalled. "I knew then that this was to be." In February 1925, Hinzenberg moved into Taliesin II, where they both waited for their divorces to become final. On the very night in 1925 that Taliesin II burned, she told him that she was pregnant with their child, a daughter they would name Iovanna. They wed on August 25, 1928, and lived together for the rest of Wright's life. The rebuilt Taliesin III would be home to Svetlana and Iovanna—and, in a broader sense, to a community of students and young architects that, beginning in 1932, the Wrights invited to come live and work with them as the Taliesin Fellowship. After Wright suffered a spell of pneumonia in 1936, the community expanded to a winter-time settlement he designed in Scottsdale, Arizona, on the outskirts of Phoenix. He dubbed it Taliesin West.

In the last quarter-century of his life, Wright pushed his ideas as far as he could. The cantilevering that he had employed for the exaggeratedly horizontal roofs of the Prairie Style houses assumed a new grandeur in Fallingwater (1934-37), the country house for Pittsburgh department-store owner Edgar Kaufmann Sr., which Wright composed of broad planes of concrete terraces and flat roofs, and—in a stroke of panache—he perched over a waterfall in western Pennsylvania. (Like many Wright buildings, Fallingwater has better stood the test of time aesthetically than physically. It required an $11.5 million renovation, completed in 2003, to correct its sagging cantilevers, leaking roofs and terraces, and interior mildew infestation.) While designing Fallingwater, Wright also transformed the skylit open clerical space of the early Larkin Building into the Great Workroom of the Johnson Wax Company Administration Building (1936) in Racine, Wisconsin, with its graceful columns that, modeled on lily pads, spread to support disks with overhead skylights of Pyrex glass tubing.

WRIGHT'S AMBITION TO ELEVATE AMERICAN society through architecture grew exponentially from the quadruple block plan in Oak Park to the scheme for Broad-

In 1937, Wright unveiled his "Usonian" homes (below left: the Pope-Leighey House, 1940), intended to be more affordable to the emerging middle class. Wealthy clients inspired more flamboyant designs, such as Fallingwater (below right: 1934-37).

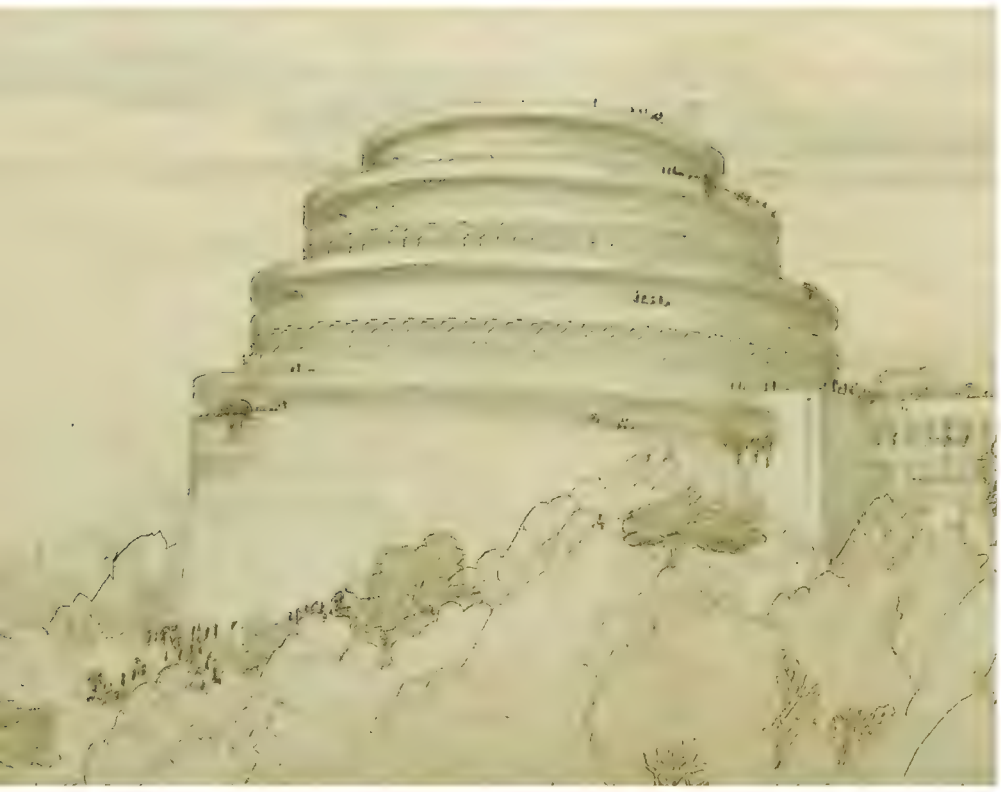
While designing Fallingwater, Wright also completed the Great Workroom of the Johnson Wax Company Administration Building in Racine, Wisconsin (above: 1936-39), with columns inspired by lily pads and skylights made from Pyrex glass tubing.

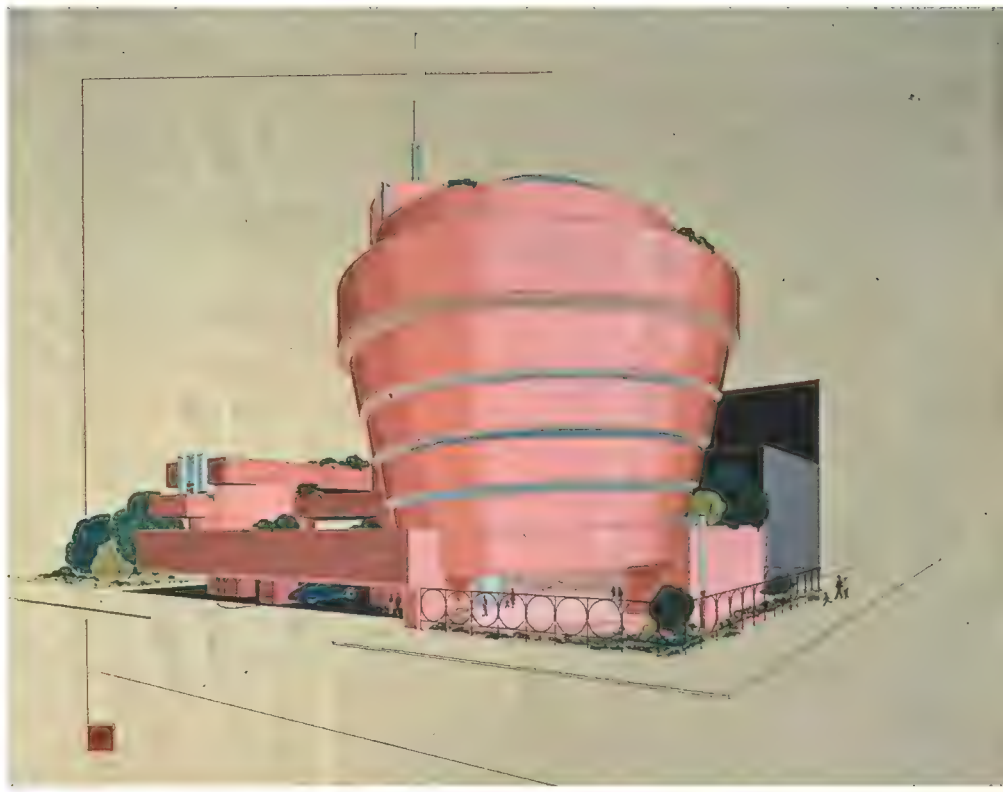
FARRELL GREHAN / ESTO; P. 58 NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION; ART RESOURCE, NY;

acre City—a proposal in the 1930s for a sprawling, low-rise development that would roll out a patchwork of houses, farms and businesses, connected by highways and monorails, across the American landscape. His desire to provide affordable, individualized homes that met the needs of middle-class Americans found its ultimate expression in the "Usonian" houses he introduced in 1937 and continued to develop afterward: customizable homes that were positioned on their sites to capture winter sun for passive solar heating and outfitted with eaves to provide summer shade; constructed with glass, brick and wood that made surface decoration such as paint or wallpaper superfluous; lit by clerestory windows beneath the roofline and by built-in electric fixtures; shielded from the street to afford privacy; and supplemented with an open carport, in deference to the means of transportation that could ultimately decentralize cities. "I don't build a house without predicting the end of the present social order," Wright said in 1938. "Every building is a missionary."

His use of "missionary" was revealing. Wright said that his architecture always aimed to serve the client's needs. But he relied on his own assessment of those needs. Speaking of residential clients, he once said, "It's their duty to understand, to appreciate, and conform insofar as possible to the idea of the house." Toward the end of his life, he constructed his second and last skyscraper, the 19-story H. C. Price Company Office Tower (1952-56) in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. After it was completed, Wright appeared with his client at a convocation in town. "A person in the audience asked the question, 'What's your first prerequisite?'" archivist Pfeiffer recalled. "Mr. Wright said, 'Well, to fulfill a client's wishes.' To which Price said, 'I wanted a three-story building.' Mr. Wright said, 'You didn't know what you wanted.'"

IN DEVELOPING THE GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Wright exercised his usual latitude in interpreting the client's wishes as well as his equally typical flair for high-flown comparisons. He described the form he came up with as an "inverted ziggurat," which nicely linked it to the temples in the Mesopotamian Cradle of Civilization. In fact, the Guggenheim traced its immediate lineage to an unbuilt Wright project that the architect based on the typology of a parking garage—a spiral ramp he designed in 1924 for the mountaintop Gordon Strong Automobile Ob-





The Guggenheim traces its lineage to an unbuilt project—a spiral ramp Wright designed for a planetarium (above left: sketch, 1924). He later described his vision for the Guggenheim (above right: sketch, 1943) as an inverted Mesopotamian ziggurat.

jective and Planetarium. Wright envisioned visitors driving their cars up an exterior ramp and handing them over to valets for conveyance to the bottom. They could then walk down a pedestrian ramp, admiring the landscape before reaching the planetarium at ground level. "I have found it hard to look a snail in the face since I stole the idea of his house—from his back," Wright wrote to Strong, after the Chicago businessman expressed dissatisfaction with the plans. "The spiral is so natural and organic a form for whatever would ascend that I did not see why it should not be played upon and made equally available for descent at one and the same time." Yet Wright also admitted admiration for the industrial designs of Albert Kahn—a Detroit-based architect whose reinforced-concrete, ramped parking garages foreshadowed both the Strong Automobile Objective and the Guggenheim.

In the long negotiations over costs and safety-code stipulations that protracted the construction of the museum, Wright was forced to compromise. "Architecture, may it please the court, is the welding of imagination and common sense into a restraint upon specialists, codes and fools," he wrote in a draft cover letter for an application to the Board of Standards and Appeals. (At the urging of Harry Guggenheim, he omitted the word "fools.") One sacrificed feature was an unconventional glass elevator that would have whisked visitors to the summit, from which they would then descend on foot. Instead, the museum has had to get by with a prosaic elevator far too small to cope with the attending crowds; as a result, most visitors survey an exhibition while ascending the ramp. Curators typically arrange their shows with that in mind. "You cannot get enough people into that tiny elevator," says David van der Leer, an assistant curator of architecture and design, who worked on the Wright exhibition. "The building is so much more heavily trafficked these days that you would need an elevator in the central void to do that."

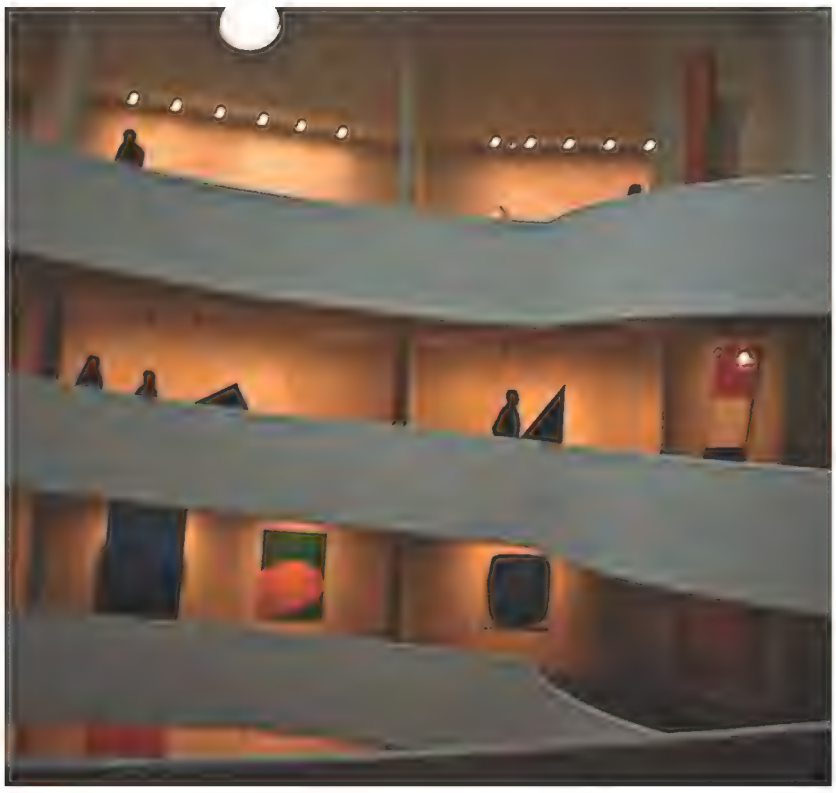
Installation of the Wright retrospective brought into high relief the discrepancies between the building's symbolic power and its functional capabilities. For instance, to display Wright's drawings—an unparalleled assortment, which for conservation reasons will not be on view again for at least a decade—the curators placed a mesh fabric "shower cap" on the overhead dome to weaken the light, which otherwise would cause the colors on the paper drawings to fade. "On the one hand, you want to display the building as well as possible, and on the other, you need to show the drawings," van der Leer explains.

The Guggenheim emerged last year from a $28 million, four-year restoration, during which cracks and water damage in the concrete were patched, and the peeling exterior paint (10 to 12 layers' worth) was removed and replaced. Wright buildings are notorious for their maintenance difficulties. During Wright's lifetime, the problems were aggravated by the architect's expressed indifference. One famous story recounts an outraged phone call made by Herbert Johnson, an important Wright client, to report that at a dinner party in his new house, water from a leaky roof was dripping on his head. Wright suggested he move his chair.

Still, when you consider that in many projects the architect designed every element, down to the furniture and light fixtures, his bloopers are understandable. Proudly describing the Larkin Building, Wright said, many years after it opened, "I was a real Leonardo da Vinci when I built that building, everything in it was my invention." Because he was constantly pushing the latest technologies to their ut-

See more of Wright's work at Smithsonian.com/wright

THE FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT FOUNDATION, SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA (2); P. 61 KEITH COLLIE / AKG-IMAGES; THE SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM FOUN



most, Wright probably resigned himself to the inevitable shortfalls that accompany experimentation. "Wright remained throughout his life the romantic he had been since childhood," historian William Cronon wrote in 1994. "As such, he brought a romantic's vision and a romantic's scale of values to the practical challenges of his life." If the architect seemed not to take the glitches in his built projects too seriously, it may be that his mind was elsewhere. "Every time I go into that building, it is such an uplifting of the human spirit," says Pfeiffer, who probably is the best living guide to Wright's thinking about the Guggenheim. The museum is often said by architectural critics to constitute the apotheosis of Wright's lifelong desire to make space fluid and continuous. But it represents something else as well. By inverting the ziggurat so that the top keeps getting wider, Wright said he was inventing a form of "pure optimism." Even in his 90s, he kept his mind open to expanding possibilities.

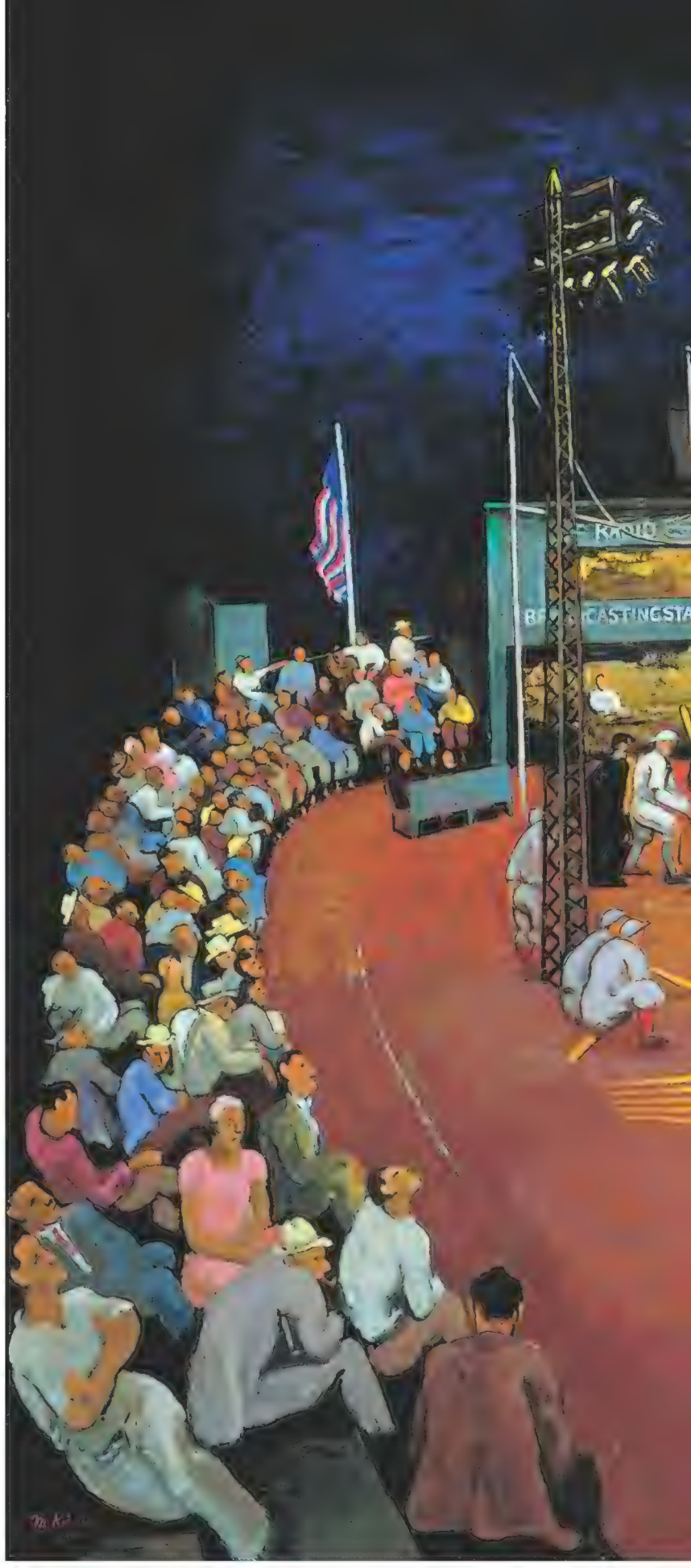
The Guggenheim was Wright's crowning achievement. "The strange thing about the ramp—I always feel I am in a space-time continuum, because I see where I've been and where I'm going," says the director of the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives.

1934

PICTURING HARD TIMES

An exhibition of Depression-era paintings, many by government-supported artists, reminds us how a previous generation weathered economic travails

BY JERRY ADLER



IN EARLY 1934, THE UNITED STATES was near the depths of what we hope will not go down in history as the First Great Depression. Unemployment was close to 25 percent and even the weather conspired to inflict misery: February was the coldest month on record in the Northeast. As the Federal Emergency Relief Act, a prototype of the New Deal work-relief programs, began to put a few dollars into the pockets of hungry workers, the question arose whether to include artists among the beneficiaries. It wasn't an obvious thing to do; by definition artists had no "jobs" to lose. But Harry Hopkins, whom President Franklin D. Roosevelt put in charge of work relief, settled the matter, saying, "Hell, they've got to eat just like other people!"

Thus was born the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), which in roughly the first four months of 1934 hired 3,749 artists and produced 15,663 paintings, murals, prints, crafts and sculptures for government buildings around the country. The bureaucracy may not have been watching too closely what the artists painted, but it certainly was counting how much and what they were paid: a total of $1,184,000, an average of $75.59 per artwork, pretty good value even then. The premise of the PWAP

A CHALLENGED AMERICA AT WORK AND PLAY

While the Smithsonian American Art Museum exhibition documents a low point in U.S. economic history, most of the paintings rise above the difficulties. In *Employment of Negroes in Agriculture* (right), Earle Richardson, an African-American painter in New York City, created an image of blacks picking cotton that emphasized their strength and dignity. *Baseball at Night* (above) by Russian-born Morris Kantor depicts a dusty contest in West Nyack, New York, that might induce nostalgia in some viewers today. At least *In the Barbershop* by Russian-born Ilya Bolotowsky still feels cozily familiar.

was that artists should be held to the same standards of production and public value as workers wielding shovels in the national parks. Artists were recruited through newspaper advertisements placed around the country; the whole program was up and running in a couple of weeks. People lined up in the cold outside government offices to apply, says George Gurney, deputy chief curator of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, where an exhibition of PWAP art is on display until January 3: "They had to prove they were professional artists, they had to pass a needs test, and then they were put into categories—Level One Artist, Level Two or Laborer—that determined their salaries."

It was not the PWAP but its better-known successor, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), that helped support the likes of young Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock before they became luminaries. The PWAP's approach of advertising for artists might not have identified the most stellar candidates. Instead, "the show is full of names we scarcely recognize today," says Elizabeth Broun, the museum's director. The great majority of them were younger than 40 when they enrolled, by which time most artists have either made their reputation or switched to another line of work. Some, it appears, would be almost completely unknown today if the Smithsonian, in the 1960s, hadn't received the surviving PWAP artworks from government agencies that had displayed them. "They did their best work for the nation," Broun says, and then they disappeared below the national horizon to the realm of regional or local artist.

"The art they produced was rather conservative, and it wouldn't be looked at by most critics today," says Francis O'Connor, a New York City-based scholar and author of the 1969 book *Federal Suppport for the Visual Arts*. "But at the time it was a revelation to many people in America that the country even had artists in it."

And not only artists, but things for them to paint. The only guidance the government offered about subject matter was that the "American scene" would be a suitable topic. The artists embraced that idea, turning out landscapes and cityscapes and industrial scenes by the yard: harbors and wharves, lumber mills and paper mills, gold mines, coal mines and open-pit iron mines, red against the gray Minnesota sky. Undoubtedly there would have been more farm scenes if the program had lasted into the summer. One of the few is Earle Richardson's *Employment of Negroes in Agriculture* (see p. 63), showing a stylized group of pickers in a field of what looks suspiciously like the cotton balls you buy in a drugstore. Richardson, an African-American who died the next year at just 23, lived in New York City, and his painting, it seems, could only have been made by someone who had never seen a cotton field.

This is art, of course, not documentary; a painter paints

JERRY ADLER *is a* Newsweek *contributing editor.*

ALL IMAGES: SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM

THE POWER OF POSITIVE PAINTING

Of all the artworks underwritten by the government in 1934, none was a more vivid statement of American optimism than Oregon native Ray Strong's expansive *Golden Gate Bridge* (above), depicting early construction of the San Francisco Bay landmark, completed in 1937. Franklin Delano Roosevelt so admired the upbeat image, he hung the canvas in the White House. In Hungarian-born Lily Furedi's stylized *Subway* (opposite), motley New York City straphangers get along—and get on with life. *Racing* (right) by yachtsman Gerald Sargent Foster reminds us that not everyone was broke.

what he sees or imagines, and the curators, Gurney and Ann Prentice Wagner, chose what interested them from among the Smithsonian's collection of some 180 PWAP paintings. But the exhibition also underscores a salient fact: when a quarter of the nation is unemployed, three-quarters have a job, and life for many of them went on as it had in the past. They just didn't have as much money. In Harry Gottlieb's *Filling the Ice House*, painted in upstate New York, men wielding pikes skid blocks of ice along wooden chutes. A town gathers to watch a game in Morris Kantor's *Baseball at Night*. A dance band plays in an East Harlem street while a religious procession marches solemnly past and vendors hawk pizzas in Daniel Celentano's *Festival*. Drying clothes flap in the breeze and women stand and chat in the Los Angeles slums in *Tenement Flats* by Millard Sheets; one of the better-known artists in the show, Sheets later created the giant mural of Christ on a Notre Dame library that is visible from the football stadium and nicknamed "Touchdown Jesus."

If there is a political subtext to these paintings, the viewer has to supply it. One can mentally juxtapose Jacob Getlar Smith's careworn *Snow Shovellers*—unemployed men trudging off to make a few cents clearing park paths—with the yachtsmen on Long Island Sound in Gerald Sargent Foster's *Racing*, but it's unlikely that Foster, described as "an avid yachtsman" on the gallery label, intended any kind of ironic commentary with his painting of rich men at play. As always, New Yorkers of every class except the destitute and the very wealthy sat side by side in the subway, the subject of a painting by Lily Furedi; the tuxedoed man dozing in his seat turns out, on closer inspection, to be a musician on his way to or from a job, while a young white woman across the aisle sneaks a glance at the newspaper held by the black man sitting next to her. None of this would seem unfamiliar today, except for the complete absence of litter or graffiti in the subway car, but one wonders how legislators from below the Mason-Dixon line might have felt about supporting a racially progressive artwork with taxpayers' money. They would be heard from a few years later, O'Connor says, after the WPA supported artists believed to be socialists, and subversive messages were detected routinely in WPA paintings: "They'd look at two blades of grass and see a hammer and sickle."

It is a coincidence that the show opened in the current delicate economic climate. It was planned in the summer of 2008 before the economy fell apart. Viewing it now, though, one can't help but feel the cold breath of financial ruin at one's back. There was a coziness in those glimpses of Depression-era America, a small-town feel even to the big-city streetscapes that can perhaps never be recaptured. The nation was still a setting for optimism 75 years ago, the factories and mines and mills awaiting the workers whose magic touch would awaken industries from their slumber. What abandoned subdivision, its streets choked with weeds, would convey the "American scene" to artists today?

THE BUSINESS OF A CHANGING WORLD

Women in *Tenement Flats* by California native Millard Sheets (above) seem to take a break from chores for friendly gossip; their Los Angeles neighborhood is now full of impersonal high-rises. Wintry New York State was the setting for Romanian-born Harry Gottlieb's *Filling the Ice House* (opposite), in which men handle ice blocks cut from lakes—a practice doomed by the refrigerator. In John Cunning's *Manhattan Skyline* (right), the city epitomizes industriousness: men shovel snow from a Brooklyn warehouse roof, tugboats haul goods and office towers beckon—or loom over?—workers.

Growing numbers of Americans and Europeans are unique mix of hipster energy and old-school tradition

HOLA,

Undergoing cultural revival and political rehabilitation, the city (looking north toward the Río de la Plata estuary) is an expat haven thanks to low-cost pesos.

partaking of the complex Argentine capital's

BY DANIEL POLITI PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANIBAL GRECO

BUENOS AIRES

"WHEN I MOVED HERE, you had to learn how to speak Spanish," says Wendy Gosselin, a translator from Brighton, Michigan, who runs her own business and relocated to Buenos Aires a decade ago. "Now you go into a restaurant and everyone's speaking English."

Not long after Michael Legee moved to Buenos Aires from London in 2004, the 34-year-old management consultant opened the Natural Deli, a market and café offering organic fare. The concept of health food seemed so alien one local woman asked, "What are you trying to cure?" But business took off, and within a year Legee added a second deli. He's aiming for ten. "I don't have much competition," he says.

Sam Nadler and Jordan Metzner, who both graduated from Indiana University in 2005, opened a downtown burrito restaurant franchise, even though they'd been warned that Argentines, famously conservative in their food choices, would not go for Tex-Mex. Two years later, their California Burrito Company often commands half-hour lines during the lunch rush. "For the first few months, we had no idea what we were doing," Nadler says. But, he says, the low cost of starting a business gave them the freedom to make mistakes. "Now we're having fun trying to bring something new to the marketplace."

"Buenos Aires seems to be a place where people come to figure their lives out," says Kristie Robinson, 30, who moved to the city more than three years ago from London and founded *The Argentimes*, a biweekly English-language newspaper. "If you come with some money saved up, you can live comfortably for six months, a year. You can pretend you are in Europe here for a quarter of the cost."

Buenos Aires—"fair winds" in Spanish—has gone through many incarnations and is reinventing itself yet again. And foreigners are playing a big part this time, too, thanks to a weak peso that attracts people from all over. The capital city, situated on the Río de la Plata, one of the world's largest estuaries, has long been described as the Paris of South America, but lately people have begun comparing it to Paris of the 1920s, emblematic as *the* place

A trading and shipping hub since Spain founded the city five centuries ago, Buenos Aires (right: at the Plaza de Mayo near the monument to the 1810 revolt that led to independence) is home to 3.2 million people, some 10 percent of them foreign-born. (Below: British entrepreneur Michael Legee at his store).

ALL PHOTOS BY ANIBAL GRECO / WPN; MAP: GUILBERT GATES

"Buenos Aires seems to be a place where people come to figure their lives out."

where artists, intellectuals and others from around the world pursued their passions.

"In New York, I was just trying to pay the rent all the time," says Seth Wulsin, a 28-year-old conceptual artist who moved to Buenos Aires in 2005. "Having time and space is really helpful. It's the greatest gift." Wulsin's first project there involved strategically breaking exterior windows at a former Buenos Aires prison, then empty and on the verge of demolition, that had held political opponents of the notorious military dictatorship that controlled Argentina from 1976 until 1983, when elections restored a democratic government.

The circumstances that have recently drawn so many foreigners to Buenos Aires arose in 2001, when the nation's economy collapsed. A main cause was a 1990s monetary policy that pegged the Argentine peso to the U.S. dollar, an anti-inflation measure that ended up stifling the economy. The resulting depression, combined with deficit spending financed by international borrowing, undermined Argentines' confidence and led to a run on the banks in late 2001. The government responded with limits on withdrawals, prompting riots and police clashes in which dozens of people nationwide were killed. President Fernando de la Rúa resigned. Argentina de-

faulted on its loans. The peso plummeted and Argentines' savings were nearly wiped out.

But the country turned into a bargain destination for people with foreign currencies. The exchange rate this past April was 3.7 pesos per U.S. dollar. Tourism, at least until the world financial collapse this past fall, has boomed, with some 2.5 million visitors to Buenos Aires in 2008, up more than sixfold since 2001.

It turns out that a surprising number of them are sticking around. Martin Frankel, the head of Expat Connection, which holds outings and seminars for English-speaking foreigners, says many people moving to Buenos Aires have no intention of staying forever but aren't just tourists, either. "The line between expats and tourists is not as clear as it used to be," he says.

THERE'S A JOKE USUALLY ATTRIBUTED to the Mexican writer Octavio Paz: "Mexicans descend from the Aztecs, Peruvians from the Incans, and Argentines . . . from the boats."

Argentina didn't really begin to open its doors to immigrants until after it gained independence from Spain, which had colonized it in 1580 and made Buenos Aires a capital in 1776. With the British defeat of Spanish naval forces in 1805, Argentina's *criollos*, or people born in Latin America of European lineage, began to seek freedom from Spanish rule. Criollo leaders voted to depose the Spanish viceroy in Buenos Aires on May 25, 1810.

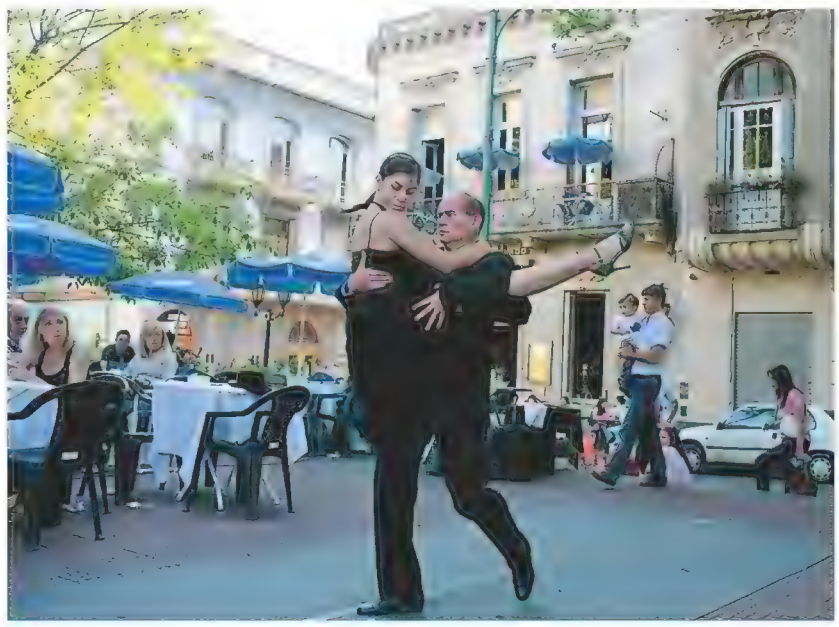
Today, the Cabildo—the building in which the criollos debated that action—is a museum that commemorates the May revolution. It fronts the Plaza de Mayo, renamed for the event and a focal point of civic and political life.

Still, many in Argentina remained loyal to Spain. It took José de San Martín, the native son of a Spanish officer, to organize an army and urge lawmakers to declare independence from Spain, which they did on July 9, 1816. Martín went on to lead a liberating army throughout the continent before exiling himself, beginning in 1824, to Belgium, England and France. Today, his body rests in a mausoleum in the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Cathedral, steps from the Cabildo, surrounded by three statues of female figures representing the nations that revere Martín as a liberator: Argentina, Peru and Chile.

Blessed with wide-open spaces and some of the world's most fertile lands, the new nation—with its 1853 constitution modeled after the United States'—turned to England for capital. Great Britain invested in everything from railways and banks to meat-processing plants. Today, British landmarks abound. The dome of the 1915 Retiro railway station was designed by British architects and made with Liverpool steel, and the subway system, the first in South America, was designed by a British company in 1913. One of the subway lines—the "A"—still operates with the original wooden cars.

But newly independent Argentina was missing an important component: people. In 1853, the Argentine political thinker Juan Bautista Alberdi declared that "to govern is to populate," and Argentina embraced immigrants, most of them from Spain and Italy. Between 1869 and 1914, the population

Nifty buildings, walkable neighborhoods and a mild climate make for engaging street life (opposite: El Caminito, a pedestrian way in the Boca district). Today's tango (below: at the Plaza Dorrego in the San Telmo district) is but a tame version of the steamy dance seen in brothels a century ago.



TIMELINE (LEFT TO RIGHT): GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK (2); ADOC-PHOTOS / ART RESOURCE, NY; AP IMAGES

PROMISE AND PERIL IN THE CAPITAL

THE EARLY YEARS

Native peoples inhabit the area when Spanish explorers arrive in 1516. Spain first tries a colony in 1536 and founds Buenos Aires in 1580.

1816: Argentina declares independence from Spain after a military campaign led by José de San Martín, since revered as the "father of the nation."

1895: Two out of three Buenos Aires residents are foreigners; British investments help fuel immigration.

1946: Former Vice President Juan Perón is elected president. His rule is marked by government expansion, censorship and repression. His popular wife, Eva, an advocate for poor people and workers, dies of cervical cancer in 1952 at age 33.

1850 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940

TIMELINE (LEFT TO RIGHT): DIEGO GOLDBERG / SYGMA / CORBIS; EDUARDO DI BAIA / AP IMAGES; PETE HOLGATE / PA / AP IMAGES; EDUARDO DI BAIA / AP IMAGES; ALAMY; EDUARDO DI BAIA / AP IMAGES

grew from 1.8 million to 7.8 million. By 1914, about 30 percent of Argentina's population was foreign-born, nearly twice the percentage of immigrants in the United States at that time.

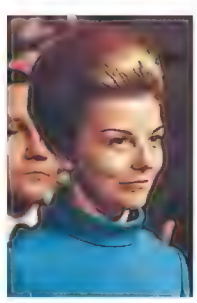
Today, the Hotel de Inmigrantes, where until the 1950s newcomers were allowed to stay free for five days, is the site of the Immigration Museum. The Boca neighborhood, near the old port, was the center of immigrant life, particularly for Italians. It's now a tourist attraction; on Sundays, Caminito Street is lined with souvenir sellers and tango dancers.

During the boom years early in the 20th century, Buenos Aires' upper classes developed what some called a "money fetish" and emulated Europe's aristocracy—especially Paris'. As a result, Buenos Aires acquired its answer to the Avenue de l'Opéra (and a world-class opera house). Buenos Aires is "a great city of Europe, giving the sensation of premature growth, but, by its prodigious advancement, the capital of a continent," the French statesman Georges Clemenceau wrote after visiting in 1910. And in a 1913 book about his travels, British diplomat James Bryce seconded the notion: "Buenos Aires is something between Paris and New York. Everybody seems to have money and to like spending it and to like letting everybody else know that it is being spent."

Not everyone was impressed by the nation's eagerness to copy continental fashions. After he visited Buenos Aires in 1923, the Colombian writer José María Vargas Vila called Argentina the "Nation of Plagiarism."

It is, at any rate, a walkable city of intriguing neighborhoods. While the middle-class Palermo district has gone wild-

1955: A coup d'état ousts Perón, who goes into exile. He is elected to a third term in 1973 and dies the next year at 78. His veep and third wife, Isabel Perón, takes office.



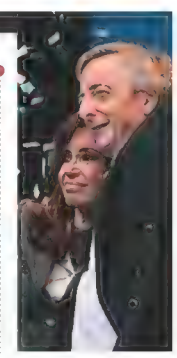
1976: A coup installs Gen. Jorge Videla, who serves as president for five years—the first of three dictators over seven years. As many as 30,000 junta opponents "disappear."

1982: President Leopoldo Galtieri orders the invasion of the Falkland Islands, a British possession. U.K. forces recapture the territory within six weeks. Outraged Argentines protest the invasion and topple the dictator.

1983: Democracy is restored with the election of Raúl Alfonsín, who takes steps to account for the disappeared.

2001: The debt-wracked economy collapses, causing a run on the banks and riots. The peso, decoupled from the U.S. dollar, plummets in value.

2003: Provincial governor Néstor Kirchner is elected president and renews efforts to prosecute junta members. He is succeeded in 2007 by Cristina Kirchner, his wife, a former senator. She is still the president.



1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000

"The country which forgets its children renounces its future," said Eva Perón, who is buried inside the Duarte family tomb (above).

ly upscale, with swank restaurants and boutique hotels, San Telmo has largely retained the downbeat character favored by backpackers, who stay in the many hostels along its narrow, cobblestone streets. Tourists pack the Sunday artisan fair in Plaza Dorrego, another place where tango dancers show off and visitors can buy antiques, handicrafts and jewelry.

Almost every neighborhood bears traces of two of the most dominant figures of the modern era, President Juan Domingo Perón and his wife Eva Duarte, or Evita. An official in the War Ministry in the 1940s, Perón rose to power by allying himself with the workers' unions and was named vice president. But his popularity troubled the military government of President Edelmiro Farrell; he forced Perón to resign, on October 9, 1945, and then had him arrested. A huge march eight days later organized by union leaders, military allies and Perón's soon-to-be wife led to his release. This show of support empowered Perón. He won the 1946 presidential election and went on to nationalize industries and focus on the plight of workers, making him widely popular.

But Perón had many detractors and no interest in hearing from them, a fact many present-day loyalists prefer to forget. He silenced critics, imprisoned opponents and pretty much destroyed any semblance of a free press by nationalizing radio networks and shutting down opposition newspapers. He also played a key role in making Argentina a haven for Nazis. It's estimated that somewhere between 3,000 and 8,000 Germans, Austrians and Croatians with links to the Nazis entered the country in the postwar period; about 300 were said to be war criminals.

"*Evita Vive*" (Evita Lives) is still a common graffito in the streets of Buenos Aires.

Evita, Argentina's most beloved first lady, often acted as a mediator between unions and her husband's administration and helped poor people through an eponymous foundation that built schools and provided medical care, housing and food. She pushed for women's suffrage, obtained in 1947. She died of cervical cancer in 1952 at age 33. "*Evita Vive*" (Evita Lives) is still a common graffito in the streets of Buenos Aires. Her much-visited grave is inside the Duarte family tomb at the Recoleta Cemetery, and the Evita Museum, located in a former home for destitute single mothers that she founded, displays several of her flamboyant dresses and tells the story of her rise from actress to powerful politician and cult figure.

DANIEL POLITI, *who writes the Today's Papers column for* Slate, *and photographer* **ANIBAL GRECO** *both live in Buenos Aires.*

Juan Perón was toppled by a military coup d'état led by Eduardo Lonardi in 1955, but in 1973 he returned from exile in Spain and won the presidency a third time. He died of a heart attack in 1974 at age 78. His body lies in a mausoleum in the Quinta de San Vicente, the country house he bought with Evita about 40 miles from the capital. The house is open to visitors on weekends.

Perón's third wife, Isabel, who was his vice president during his third term, led the government for nearly two years after his death. Then, in 1976, the military ousted her—the beginning of modern Argentina's darkest days.

THE POST-PERÓN military government—led for the first five years by Jorge Videla and for another two by a succession of two generals—imprisoned, tortured and murdered government critics and activists. As many as 30,000 people disappeared, human rights groups say. The military's invasion of the British Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) in 1982, which Argentina had long claimed, was a move calculated to galvanize support for the regime; it backfired when Great Britain, to the junta's surprise, moved quickly to defend the territory. Popular uprisings and dissent within the army forced President Reynaldo Bignone to call for elections, held in 1983.

Initially, the elected government of Raúl Alfonsín (who died this past March at age 82) was inclined to prosecute military leaders behind the atrocities, but under pressure from the armed forces he approved amnesty laws in 1986 and 1987 that put an end to most of the ongoing trials. President Carlos Saúl Menem, who came to power in 1989, signed pardons in 1989 and 1990 that freed convicted officers to "close a sad and black period of national history." Tens of thousands of outraged people protested the pardons.

Argentines soon began openly acknowledging events of the recent past. In a pivotal event, Adolfo Scilingo, a retired navy captain, became the first former officer to state publicly that the military regime killed so-called subversives, saying in 1995 that prisoners had been drugged and thrown from airplanes into the sea. "In 1996, 1997 things began to change and there started to be an opening to talk about the issue," says Alejandra Oberti, of Open Memory, a group dedicated to increasing awareness of the dictatorship's horrors. In 1998, the city's legislature approved a law to create Memorial Park, which would include a monument to commemorate the victims of the dictatorship.

After the 2001 economic crisis, Argentina lived through a series of short-term presidents until Néstor Kirchner was elected in 2003 and served four years, emphasizing human rights. (In 2005, Argentina's Supreme Court declared the amnesty laws unconstitutional. New trials of former military officers implicated in human rights abuses began in July 2007.) Argentina's current president is Kirchner's wife, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, a lawyer and former senator. She has promised to prosecute government officials involved in political killings.

The new political and legal climate has emboldened human rights advocates. "For so many years we had to put up with people closing the door on our faces whenever we went to ask for something," said Mabel Gutierrez, leader of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared for Political Reasons. In 1978, her 25-year-old son, Alejandro, vanished. Mabel Gutierrez died of a heart attack this past April at age 77.

Argentines still grapple with the dictators' "Dirty War" against dissidents in the '70s and '80s (left: a former detention center is now a museum). Mabel Gutierrez (below: in 2008 at the Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism) fought for the disappeared, including her son. She died this past April.

Adjacent to the Memorial Park is the Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism, inaugurated in 2007. The site, still under construction and due to open this year, is reminiscent of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. It consists of a walkway with tall walls that list each known victim and the year he or she disappeared.

The Escuela Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA), the most notorious of the roughly 340 detention and torture sites in Argentina during the dictatorship years, also serves as an unof-

ficial memorial. Of the approximately 5,000 prisoners who passed through its gates, only around 200 survived. Human rights organizations are working alongside officials to turn part of the ESMA site into a museum of state-sponsored terrorism. To see the former navy school, a visitor must join a scheduled tour. It conveys the horror of the dictatorship years. There are rooms where prisoners were tortured and drugged before their "death flights," and rooms where women gave birth to babies who were then taken away and placed with families sympathetic to the military regime.

It was on his first day in the city that Wulsin, the New York City transplant, came across another notorious site—the Caseros Prison. "I had no idea what it was, but I quickly saw how the building had this really powerful effect on its surroundings," he recalls. "It spanned an entire block, rose 22 stories over a residential neighborhood where most of the buildings are two or three stories." When he learned of its sordid history—and that the building was set to be demolished—he conceived an ambitious art project. By strategically smashing the panes in the prison's large windows, he created what appeared to be 48 large faces over 18 stories. Wulsin's project now lives on in photographs and is to be featured in a documentary movie. Pablo Videla, a political activist who was imprisoned by the junta for ten years, serving two months in that building, praises Wulsin's work precisely because it symbolized how inmates were kept in the dark. The project, he says, seems to "bring out the faces of those of us who were inside."

Even popular culture has begun to probe the dictatorship years. In 2006, a prime-time TV soap opera, "Montecristo," an adaptation of Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, riveted viewers with a plot that drew on the repression. "I had never seen the years of military dictatorship talked about so openly," says Maricel Lobos, a 31-year-old Argentine who watched the show. "It was *exciting*."

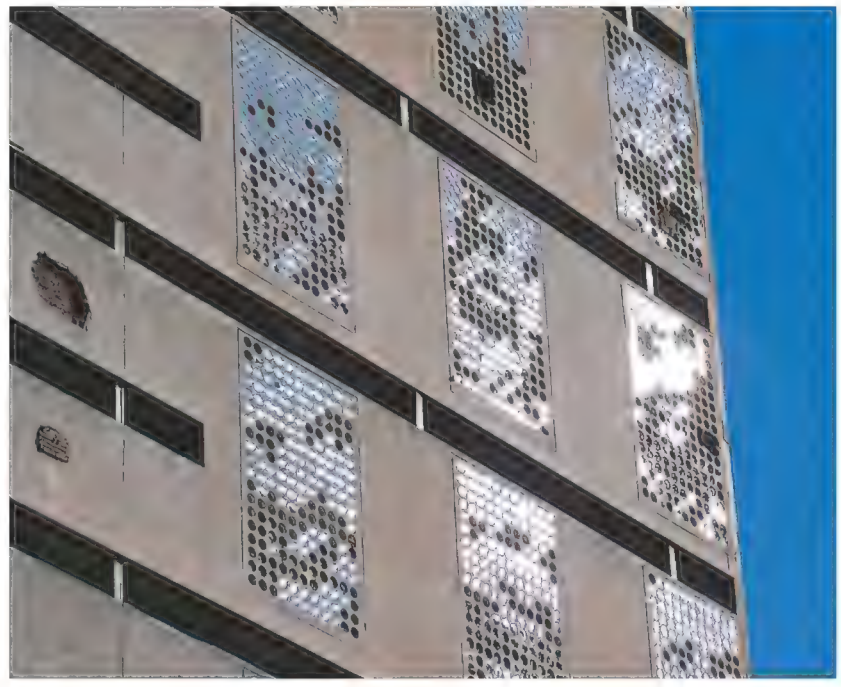
"Television doesn't open new doors," says Oberti, the activist. "These shows can only be done at a time when people are willing to talk about these issues."

BUENOS AIRES IS, IN FACT, a favorite film and television locale. According to official figures, more than 1,000 commercials were shot in the city in 2007 and 2008, half for overseas markets. Richard Shpuntoff, a 44-year-old filmmaker who moved to Buenos Aires from the Bronx in 2002, works as a script translator and on-set interpreter. "The commercials allow the technical people to make a living," Shpuntoff says, "so they can then work on smaller, independent productions."

In 2008, the director Francis Ford Coppola filmed *Tetro* in Buenos Aires, about an Italian immigrant family in the city. A local production company built a version of Wisteria Lane just outside the city, where the Argentine, Colombian and Brazilian versions of "Desperate Housewives" were filmed. And Dutch producers found the city's landscapes so enticing they filmed a television series here—"Julia's Tango," about four Dutch women who work at a bed-and-breakfast in the Palermo neighborhood, haunt of the great Argentine writer and poet Jorge Luis Borges.

The city's speedy evolution is also evident on the culinary scene. Nicolas Vainberg, a Buenos Aires native, left the city in 1996 and lived in the United States for eight years, mostly in Hawaii and Los Angeles, working in the service industry. Then he sold his house in California and returned to put the proceeds into a restaurant and martini bar, Mosoq, which he runs with his wife, who is Peruvian. They serve what could be described as modern Peruvian cuisine—white fish sashimi marinated with passion-fruit juice, cannelloni made with purple corn. A decade ago, he recalls, "All the restaurants had pretty much the same menu." By now, he says, "the restaurant scene has changed dramatically."

"It's not an easy scene to penetrate," American artist Tamara Stuby (below) says of the Buenos Aires art world. In a monumental art project (right), New York City transplant Seth Wulsin removed windowpanes from a former prison, creating ghostly faces that evoke political prisoners once held there.



RIGHT: SETH WULSIN

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Known for conservative tastes, Buenos Aires is now adventurous, says Vainberg (in his nouveau Peruvian restaurant, Mosoq).

As for the art world, Argentina's richest woman, María Amalia Lacroze de Fortabat, recently opened the door to her collection in a new museum in the old Puerto Madero neighborhood, where the city's most expensive condos, apartments and opulent hotels tower above riverside streets lined with pricey restaurants. The Fortabat Museum houses works by well-known international artists, such as Pieter Bruegel, J.M.W. Turner and Andy Warhol, as well as Argentine artists, including Antonio Berni and Xul Solar.

The other major, newly accessible collection, the privately owned Malba, founded by local magnate Eduardo Costantini, holds a permanent collection of Latin American works by the likes of Frida Kahlo and Fernando Botero. And then there's Appetite, a four-year-old avant-garde gallery in the San Telmo neighborhood.

Tamara Stuby is a 46-year-old artist from Poughkeepsie, New York, who moved to Buenos Aires in 1995 and married an Argentine artist with whom she runs a program called El Basilisco, which houses various artists for ten weeks. "It's a fantastic place to live and work," Stuby says of the city.

Despite the similarities of today's Buenos Aires and Paris of the 1920s, there's a big difference: the Internet. For every foreigner trying to integrate into an existing arts scene, there's somebody else with a laptop working out of a Buenos Aires apartment for an overseas employer. Tom and Maya Frost, a couple in their mid-40s, outsourced themselves to Buenos Aires three years ago from the Portland, Oregon, area. Tom does the same work he did before—importing Asian jewelry to the United States. "We really hit the jackpot," Tom says. "It's such an amazing place." The Frosts have four daughters, ages 18 to 22, and Maya Frost says they've saved money for their education by living in Argentina. "We're spending much less money per month, we live a much better lifestyle and we have more time to hang out with our kids," Maya says. "What's not to like?"

> "We're spending much less money . . . we live a much better lifestyle. . . . What's not to like?"

Maya became so enamored with finding alternative ways for kids to get an overseas education while bypassing expensive study-abroad programs that she wrote a book about it, *The New Global Student*, published last month. "I was surprised by how easy it was," she says, referring to finding an agent and publisher in the United States via e-mail. "It shows the virtual thing can really work."

See more images of Buenos Aires at Smithsonian.com/buenosaires

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PRESENCE OF MIND

Recovered Ground

Gen. George S. Patton's grandson finds his calling in the ashes of his father's journals **BY BENJAMIN W. PATTON**

IN 1986, the year I turned 21, my father accidentally set fire to our basement. Until then he could often be found down there, in the office he'd carved out for himself in a far corner, smoking a cigar and working on his diaries. He'd been keeping them—dozens of identical volumes bound in red canvas—for most of his adult life.

In the span of a few hours, the flames that rose from the smoldering butt he'd tossed in the wastebasket destroyed two rooms. My father suffered second-degree burns trying to rescue his journals, but nearly all of them were reduced to ash.

A year later, a conservator handed us what was left of them, suggesting to Dad

The author and his father (above) in 1978 at the North Africa American Cemetery in Tunisia, where Gen. George S. Patton (left: in 1944) commanded the U.S. II Corps in 1943.

BENJAMIN W. PATTON; ULLSTEIN BILD / GRANGER COLLECTION

Watch a video about the Pattons at Smithsonian.com/patton

that he could review these scraps for an autobiography and start anew. Instead, my father—the namesake and only son of the World War II general George S. Patton Jr., and a decorated general and famously tough warrior in his own right—choked up. "I'm sorry, I just can't," he said. And he never did.

Someone once told me that when a person dies, it's like a library burning down. My dad reversed the idea: the burning of his office extinguished something in him.

History had always formed a huge part of our family life; the fact that my grandfather had kept thousands of pages of his own letters and diaries—later published as *The Patton Papers*—was no fluke. As kids, my four siblings and I were fed a steady diet of biographies. Wherever we lived—Kentucky, Alabama, Texas, Germany—we spent a lot of time trudging through battlefields and other historical sites. After the basement fire, assorted family relics dating back to the Civil War era were restored, cataloged and donated to museums. The oil portrait of my

We met him on R & R when I was about 3. "What did you say his name was?" I asked my mother. "Daddy?"

grandfather that was represented in the film *Patton* now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. Other keepsakes went to West Point and the Patton Museum in Kentucky, and each has a story. For just one example, there's a gold coin that my great-great-grandfather, Confederate Col. George Patton, carried in his vest pocket during the Civil War. When a Yankee Minié ball struck him during the Battle of Giles Court House in 1862, the coin deflected the bullet just enough to prevent it from penetrating his gut and likely killing him.

A year or so after the fire, I offered to interview my father on audiotape. I wanted to do it partly for our family and partly for him. The loss of his journals had caused him even more sorrow than his retirement from the military six years earlier. I wanted him to be able to share his stories with someone who cared—and who found them inherently valuable.

I was the right age to listen. My father had left for the second of his three tours in Vietnam about the time I was a year old, and my first memory of him is when we flew to Hawaii on R & R to meet him when I was about 3. My mother still teases me about my tugging on her dress at the airport and asking, "What did you say his name was? Daddy?"

As a child, my father had been quite close to his own father: they rode horses, read poetry and even built a 22-foot motorboat together in the garage. But after my dad left for boarding school at 13, they communicated mainly through letters, most of which were a formal, man-to-man mix of advice and strategy. A 1944 letter written from Europe to my

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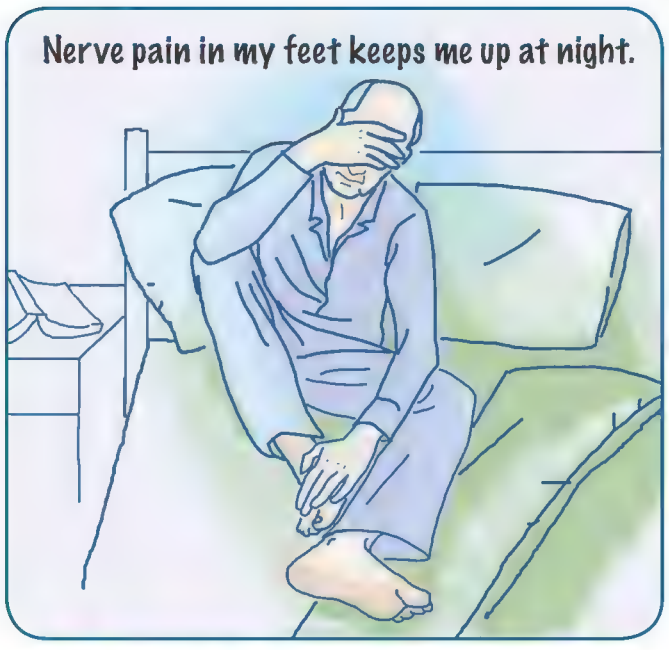

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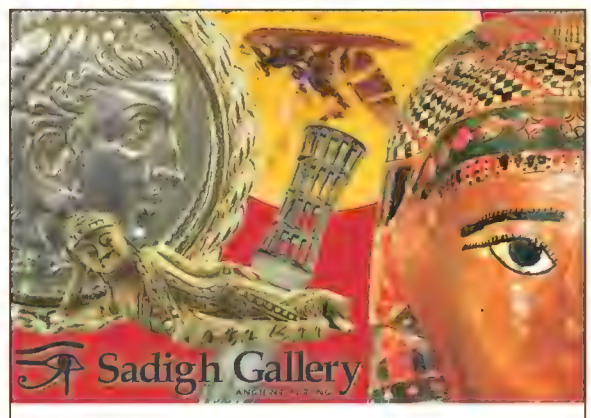

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dad, who had just flunked math, captures the tenor of their new relationship: "Get as high a stand in math as you can before you hit the stuff you flunked on. In that way, you have further to retreat. It's just like war: in a delaying action, meet the enemy as far out as possible."

During college, my father saw his father only twice—once before then-Maj. Gen. Patton left for North Africa as part of the secret Operation Torch invasion force in 1942 and again briefly just after the war, when my grandfather returned to the States for a War Bond tour featuring victory parades in Boston and Los Angeles. Then he returned to Germany, where he died December 21, 1945, at age 60, after breaking his neck in an automobile accident.

My father turned 22 just days later, and the pressure to live up to his father's legend was already building. When he graduated from West Point the following June, an old veteran shook his hand and said, "Well, George, you'll never be the man your father was, but congratulations."

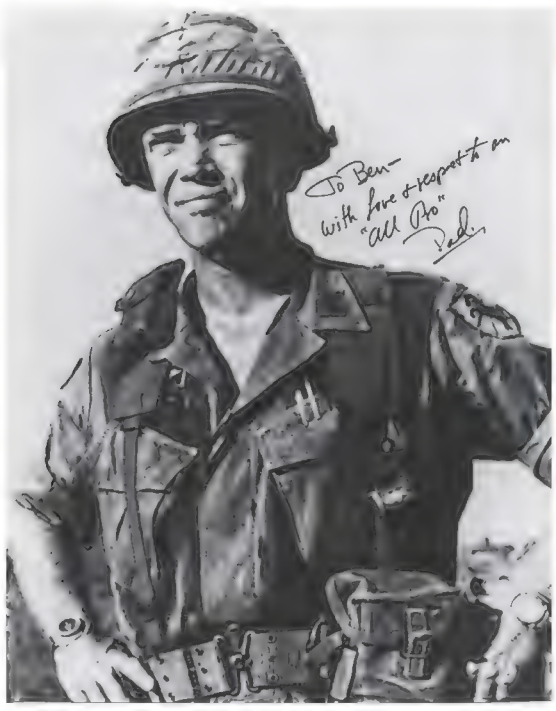
One thing my father resolved to be was a family man. Even though he became a general himself and was often immersed in his military duties, he went out of his way to spend time with us. And while he never claimed to be an expert in anything nonmilitary, he was a first-class enthusiast. If he went hunting or fishing with friends or fellow soldiers, he often took me or one of my siblings along. He played the guitar at family parties (a self-proclaimed "three-chord man") and taught us how to ski, sail and play tennis. Sailing, he'd invite my friends and me to stay up half the night playing poker in an invariably smoke-filled cabin. He encouraged my brother George, developmentally delayed from birth, to compete in the Special Olympics and also become a champion barrel racer. During rare visits from my sister Margaret, who had become a Benedictine nun over Dad's initial protests, he'd get up early to pick blueberries for her breakfast. He wrote my mother silly but heartfelt poems.

People often said he had the voice my grandfather wished he had—my grandfather's voice was high-pitched with a

slightly patrician lilt, while my father actually sounded like George C. Scott. But even when I clashed with him as a teenager, I saw through his tough, hard-edged persona.

At 21, I was just starting to appreciate the fact that my father was—and always had been—one of my biggest supporters and closest friends. Everyone had a story about him. With our audiotaping project, I would get to hear them firsthand.

Over the next six years we spent many hours talking, with me picking his brain for every detail and vignette he could remember. Once we got



"My father (above: in 1968) saw more frontline combat [than my grandfather]."

going, it was as though a massive vault had been opened, and the stories began to pour out. He spoke of being bounced on Gen. John J. "Black Jack" Pershing's knee as a young boy, walking Gen. George C. Marshall's dog and being pulled out of school by his father to attend a talk by British soldier T. E. Lawrence (also known as Lawrence of Arabia). At 13, my father sailed from Hawaii to Southern California aboard a small schooner with his parents, a few of their friends and a professional mate. "We went through a school of blackfin tuna for four days straight," he told me. "They stirred up so much phosphorus [in fact, bioluminescent plankton] in the water that you could actually read a book on deck at night."

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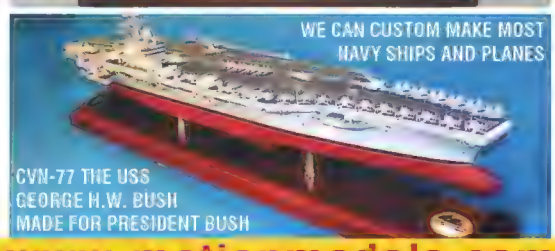

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He also told me about a fellow West Point graduate who had served under him when my father commanded the storied 11th Armored Cavalry ("Blackhorse") Regiment in Vietnam in 1968-69. His unit had performed poorly under fire, and the young captain asked to be relieved. After a long talk with my father—a colonel at the time—he changed his mind and asked for one more chance to get his outfit into shape before relinquishing command. In a subsequent firefight, the captain earned the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second-highest award for valor in combat. "Although terribly costly to him, he chose the harder right rather than the easier wrong," said my dad. "And that's what wins battles. That's what wins wars."

I didn't need to ask about the captain's fate. The John Hays plot at our family's farm in Massachusetts is just one of many that my dad named for soldiers killed under his command. To us, the hand-painted signs all over our property mark just how deeply Dad felt the loss of his troops. Even today, veterans come and quietly wander our fields.

What our taped conversations helped me realize was that my dad was every bit the soldier that his father was. He saw more actual frontline combat and was just as highly decorated by his country for valor. He commanded more than 4,400 men—the largest combat unit led by someone of his rank and age during Vietnam—and more than once landed in his helicopter in the middle of a battle, pulled out his revolver and led the charge. Along the way, he earned the nation's second- and third-highest medals for bravery—twice each—and a Purple Heart. When he retired to Massachusetts in 1980, Dad started a produce farm on the family property. Today, Green Meadows Farm, north of Boston, is a thriving organic operation with the participation of more than 300 local families.

My father didn't boast about his achievements, and he didn't want to be seen as iconic. Maybe that's why he never worked in my grandfather's home office, with its voluminous library and perfect replica of Napoleon's

desk. "Too much damn traffic," Dad would say. Then he'd head off to his plywood-walled office in the basement, every surface a collage of photos of fellow soldiers and family.

Re-examining his life had always kept him engaged; now, our interviews revived him. Eventually, Dad gave the transcripts to a biographer, and a book about his life—Brian Sobel's *The Fighting Pattons*—was published after all.

I disappointed my father when I chose not to follow him into the military, and I frustrated him even more when I dawdled about a career. But here's the strange thing: after our tap-

"One thing my father (with the author c. 1990) resolved to be was a family man."

ing was finished, other families with stories to preserve began to find me.

Over the past several years, I've found myself, camera in hand, sitting with the family of an African-American general on the eve of his 80th birthday; a well-born Bostonian who drove an ambulance in World War II and then moved out West to ride in rodeos and raise cattle; an aeronautical engineer and senior executive in the Apollo program who was among the first to propose a moon landing to President John F. Kennedy; even Manfred Rommel, former long-time mayor of Stuttgart and son of the famed "Desert Fox" of World War II. I found a career as a producer and film educator, much of which I devote to recording personal histories.

After a long struggle with Parkinson's disease, my father passed away in the

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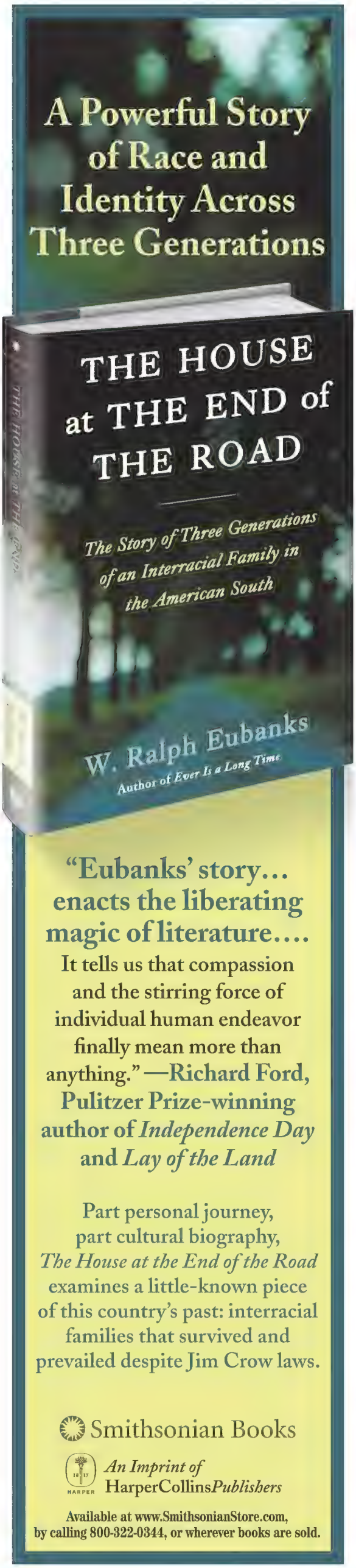
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summer of 2004. He was 80 years old and had lived as full a life as anyone could. I'd like to think that, were he still here, he would respect what I'm doing and understand why I'm doing it. In fact, many of my film projects involve working with veterans. Things have kind of circled back.

Every family has a story, and every member's story is worth preserving—certainly for the living family, but even more so for future generations. Experiencing history through the lens of another person's life can offer unexpected insight into your own. It gets you to think: What sort of mark will *I* make? How will *I* be remembered?

The key is to start now, whether with a tape recorder or video camera. In her wonderful book *The Writing Life*, Annie Dillard tells of a note found in Michelangelo's studio after he died. I have a copy pinned up in my office. Scribbled by the elderly artist to an apprentice, it reads: "Draw, Antonio, draw, Antonio, draw and do not waste time."

BENJAMIN W. PATTON, *a filmmaker based in New York City, can be reached at* ben@pattonproductions.com.

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Richard W. Wetherill
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It is commonly thought that the brain is the body's computer, receiving data and acting on it accordingly. Wetherill defined the process as *right thinking causes right results, whereas wrong thinking causes wrong results.*

People's brains function that way because ***whoever or whatever is the creator*** provided natural laws to enable human beings eventually to evolve into the kind of beings intended by that creator.

Today, natural laws are known as laws of physics, but there is also a behavioral law identified by Wetherill. He called it the ***law of absolute right***. It states: ***Right action gets right results; wrong action gets wrong results***, and it defines right action as rational and honest responses to whatever happens.

As with all natural laws, our ***results*** tell us if we are conforming to the behavioral law or contradicting it.

Originally that was the most unpopular information ever presented to a society that, from the beginning, established the practice of blaming wrong results on other people, bad luck, and later on, life styles, faulty diets and inherited genes—almost never on self.

It is widely known that laws of physics make mandatory people's physical activities. Thus they learn not to touch live wires, not to speed across an oil slick, and that gravity keeps pedestrians tethered to the earth.

But, lacking the knowledge of nature's ***law of right behavior***, society still believes that suffering and even death are the inevitable plight of mankind.

There are well-meaning efforts being made to cope with those typical wrong results: charitable giving to help the needy, finding cures for diseases, and addressing famine and genocide overseas.

Our books and public-service advertising tell people how those problems could be *eliminated*. In the meantime, disinterest delays the breakthrough that theoretically will come when enough people learn to conform to creation's ***law of absolute right***.

As far back as the 1960s, behavioral experts declared this information too simplistic and unworkable while, at the same time, surreptitiously inserting parts of it into their own programs.

Do not be deterred by differing expert opinions. Learn about the behavioral law. Conform to it, not to benefit you (although it will) but to do what is right because that is what nature's behavioral law calls for. If that is your approach, you will be astonished by the results. If you are not astonished, be sure you are conforming to creation's law of absolute right with the same eagerness as you conform to creation's law of gravity.

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Words to Remember

Amanda McKittrick Ros predicted she would achieve lasting fame as a novelist. Unfortunately, she did **BY MILES CORWIN**

THERE HAS NEVER BEEN a shortage of bad writers. Almost anyone can bang out an atrocious book, but to achieve fame and adulation for it takes a certain kind of genius.

In this literary sub-genre, Irish writer Amanda McKittrick Ros reigns supreme. "Uniquely dreadful," proclaims the *Oxford Companion to Irish Literature*. "The greatest bad writer who ever lived," says author Nick Page.

Ros, who died in 1939, abused (some would say, tortured) the English language in three novels and dozens of poems. She refers to eyes as "globes of glare," legs as "bony supports," pants as a "southern necessary," sweat as "globules of liquid lava" and alcohol as the "powerful monster of mangled might." The Oxford literary group "The Inklings," which included C. S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, held competitions to see who could read her work aloud longest while keeping a straight face.

Mark Twain considered her first book, *Irene Iddesleigh*, as "one of the greatest unintentionally humorous novels of all time." Consider this passage: "Speak! Irene! Wife! Woman! Do not sit in silence and allow the blood that now boils in my veins to ooze through cavities of unrestrained passion and trickle down to drench me with its crimson hue!"

In Ros' last novel, *Helen Huddleson*, she named characters after fruits, including Lord Raspberry (and his sister Cherry), Sir Peter Plum, Christopher Currant and the Earl of Grape. And Ros' penchant for alliteration resists restraint: The villainous Madame Pear, she wrote, "had a swell staff of sweet-faced helpers swathed in stratagem, whose members and garments glowed with the lust of the loose, sparkled with the tears of the tortured, shone with the sunlight of bribery, dangled with the diamonds of distrust, slashed with sapphires of scandals. . . . "

Ros' husband, a train station manager in a small Northern Ireland town, financed the publication of *Irene Iddesleigh* as a tenth wedding anniversary present. A reader sent a copy to humorist Barry Pain, who in an 1898 review called it "a thing that happens once in a million years." Initially entertained, he soon "shrank before it in tears and terror." In the preface to her next book Ros attacked Pain as a "clay crab of corruption" and a "cancerous irritant wart." Like many novelists, she believed her critics lacked the intellect to appreciate her talent and came to believe that her growing legion of detractors conspired against her for revealing the corruption of the ruling class—thereby disturbing, as she put it, "the bowels of millions."

In the past century, a few Ros enthusiasts have kept her legend alive. A biography—*O Rare Amanda!*—was published in 1954; a collection of her most memorable passages was anthologized—*Thine in Storm and Calm*—in 1988; and two years ago, she was feted at a Belfast literary festival.

Ros imagined "the million and one who thirst for aught that drops from my pen," and predicted she would "be talked about at the end of a thousand years."

She's well on her way.

MILES CORWIN *is the author of three books and teaches literary journalism at the University of California at Irvine.*

ERIC PALMA